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## Editorial

This edition of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* has more pages than normal. In greeting you with the first edition of 2014 we start with a theological reflection on the legacy to us as baptistic people of the late James William McClendon Junior. Jim McClendon was a good friend of IBTS when our institution was in Rüschlikon, lecturing there. He was a doctoral supervisor of our current IBTS Rector, Parush R Parushev, and, with Brian Haymes (former IBTS Board member), I was instrumental in inviting Jim to visit British Baptists to talk about his baptistic theological perspective, which has been important for a generation of European Baptist scholars.

We also offer articles by three other key members of our IBTS community. Ian Randall offers us an important article on the revival experienced on both sides of the Atlantic amongst English and Welsh speakers from 1857. This is a fascinating insight into one significant experience of Christian revival cutting across denominational boundaries and, as Ian explains, effecting the renewal of such areas of church life as the Eucharist.

Tim Noble then explores the world of theological reflection upon late modern capitalism in the writings of some of the key theologians of liberation. This is a relevant and trenchant topic in this age when capitalism and banking have been seen to have structural flaws, and Christian leaders, such as the current Archbishop of Canterbury, have had insightful comments to make to the principalities and powers of western economic life.

Finally, John Weaver, whom we welcome as the new Chair of the IBTS Board of Trustees, provides a questioning article, asking what on earth is the church for and how are we to understand the daily activities of believers in the context of the coming Kingdom of God?

So, feast on the reflections to stimulate your own theological engagement.

**Keith G Jones**  
Senior Research Fellow, IBTS, Prague

## Some Reflections on McClendon's Theological Project

Parush R Parushev

Were Professor James William McClendon, Jr. still with us, we would soon celebrate his ninetieth birthday.<sup>1</sup> Born in Louisiana in 1924, the son of a Methodist father and a Baptist mother, he was raised and ordained in the Southern Baptist tradition<sup>2</sup> and preferred calling himself a 'baptist' theologian.<sup>3</sup> McClendon had a long and distinguished teaching career. For a good half of his life he taught theology at a number of public universities and theological seminaries, most of the time and not by his own choice, outside Baptist seminaries.<sup>4</sup> Among those were the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (this was his first place of employment as a theologian from which he was dismissed after supporting students joining a march of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.), the University of San Francisco (where he was the first non-Catholic theologian in the USA to have a tenured position in a Catholic theology department), Stanford University, Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Notre Dame, St. Mary's Moraga, Goucher College and Baylor University. From the early 1970s he held a tenured position at the Episcopal Church Divinity School of the Pacific, part of the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley in California (where McClendon was a member of the core faculty). After retiring from CDSP/GTU in 1989, he became Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. McClendon passed away untimely on 30 October 2000, receiving from the publishers in the last weeks of his life the *Witness* – the third and the last volume of his life-long writing project.

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<sup>1</sup> Anticipating this jubilee date, Baylor University Press reprinted McClendon's life-long project – his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, for the first time in one edition and with a new introduction by Curtis W. Freeman (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012). McClendon, originally published the three volumes in a sequence with Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee: *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol. I* (1986; rev. ed. 2002); *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Vol. II* (1994); and *Witness: Systematic Theology, Vol. III* (2000). Subsequent references will be to the Baylor University Press edition.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see his intellectual autobiography 'The Radical Road One Baptist Took', in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXIV:4 (October 2000), pp. 503-510, available at <http://www.goshen.edu/mqr/pastissues/oct00Mcclendon.html> (last consulted on 18 November 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Ched Myers, 'Embodying the "Great Story", An Interview with James Wm. McClendon', *Witness* 83, no. 12 (2000): p. 12 (pp. 12-15). For the term small 'b' Baptist, see *Ethics*, pp. 19-20. McClendon's baptist standpoint is another way of being a Christian, different from the Catholic and Protestant (and Orthodox). With a reference to Max Weber, Curtis Freeman rightly points out that 'McClendon's "baptist" is an *ideal type*, ... a "mental construct" that cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. ... The point of utilizing a type is not to describe discrete concrete phenomena, but rather as a theory to explain the big picture.' (See 'Introduction' in McClendon, *Ethics*, p. ix).

<sup>4</sup> For details, see Michael N. Broadway, 'Introduction' in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 27:1 (Spring 2000), pp. 6-7 (pp. 5-19).

The year 2014 is uniquely important in remembering some key reference points in the life and work of one of the most important Baptist theologians of the twentieth century. Guided by his (and James Smith's) understanding that theology is a 'science of convictions',<sup>5</sup> he pioneered biography as a genre for theological reflection. *Biography as Theology*,<sup>6</sup> published forty years ago, is central to the entire project of McClendon. In a Wittgensteinian manner it establishes a non-foundational convictional (one may call it post-modern or late modern) way of doing theology<sup>7</sup> from a baptistic perspective<sup>8</sup> and it has helped in the emergence of the narrative theology movement.<sup>9</sup> This year also marks the twentieth year since the first printing of *Doctrine* – the second volume of his much celebrated three-volume *Systematic Theology*.

These reflections do not intend to enquire into the details of McClendon's systematic thinking: this has been done on other occasions in detail.<sup>10</sup> These reflections are an attempt at presenting McClendon's theological project in a nut-shell with the focus on *Doctrine*,<sup>11</sup> perhaps too ambitiously considering the complex structure of his argumentation. I was

<sup>5</sup> James Wm. McClendon, Jr., and James M. Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism*, rev. and enl. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994; originally published as *Understanding Religious Convictions* by University of Notre Dame Press in 1975), p. 184.

<sup>6</sup> James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, reprint (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002; originally by Abingdon Press, 1974 and rev. ed. Trinity Press International, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Timothy George and David S. Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), p. 693.

<sup>9</sup> See his 'Narrative Ethics and Christian Ethics', *Faith and Philosophy* 3:4 (October 1986), pp. 383-396. Cf. Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction*, reprint (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991; originally by Abingdon in 1982) and Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol and Story* (Cambridge, MA/ Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 154-155.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. see the *Festschrift* edited by Hauerwas et. al., *Theology Without Foundation* and the *Festschrift* published by the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion in the USA in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 27:1 (Spring 2000); Carl E. Braaten, 'The Harvest of Evangelical Theology', *First Things* 61 (March 1996), pp. 45-48; Thomas Finger, 'Two Agendas for Baptist Theology', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 27:3 (Fall 2000), pp. 303-311; Barry Harvey, 'Beginning in the Middle of Things: Following James McClendon's *Systematic Theology*', *Modern Theology*, 18:2 (2002): pp. 251-265; Robert Barron, 'Considering the Systematic Theology of James William McClendon, Jr.', *Modern Theology*, 18:2 (2002): pp. 267-276; Jonathan R. Wilson, 'Can Narrative Christology Be Orthodox?', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 8:4 (October 2006), pp. 371-381; Parush R. Parushev, 'Doing Theology in a Baptist Way (Theologie op een baptistenmanier)', in Teun van der Leer, ed., *Zo zijn onze manieren! In Gesprek over gemeentetheologie*, Baptistica Reeks, vol. 1 (Barneveld, NL: Unie van Baptisten Gemeenten in Nederland, September 2009, in Dutch), pp. 7-22; 66-75; and Idem. 'Baptist Convictional Hermeneutics', in Helen Dare and Simon Woodman, eds., *The 'Plainly Revealed' Word of God?* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2011), pp. 172-90; Curtis W. Freeman's excellent introduction to the Baylor University's publication of McClendon's *Systematic Theology*, pp. vii-xxxviii.

<sup>11</sup> McClendon presented an early summary of the course of his theological undertaking in a graduation address, delivered on 25 April 1985 at the closing of the academic year at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, 'The Baptist Vision' (unpublished manuscript available in the IBTS Archive and through this author).

prompted to do so following on from the first three-volume set of McClendon's *Systematic Theology* published by Baylor University Press, with the thoughtful introduction of Curtis Freeman, and its first edition in Chinese.<sup>12</sup> I am particularly pleased to think of Chinese Christians holding in their hands the second volume of McClendon's remarkable trilogy as I did it for the first time some twenty years ago while studying theology in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the USA. In 1994 McClendon was invited to deliver the named lecture series of the school, and he introduced to us his just-published volume of *Doctrine*. His personality, his fresh and innovative theological perspective, and his unique way of presenting ideas changed my life as a student. Listening to him I realised that as Baptists we are not, as I thought before, a theologically impoverished relative in the family of faiths. Our vision of the Kingdom of God,<sup>13</sup> our personal and communal living shaped by experiencing and witnessing to the presence of God, our daily following in the footsteps of the Way of Jesus, all of that and more are precious bits of lived-out theology that can be offered as a gift to all communions of the family of Christian faith – and beyond. This vision provides rich material for effective theologising – the primary or the first-order theological endeavours of doctrinal teaching of a faith-community. As McClendon defines it, Christian doctrine responds to the question: 'What must the church teach to be authentic church here and now?'<sup>14</sup> Thus understood doctrine is a constitutive practice for the community of faith.

McClendon started his theological journey by reflecting on the obvious fact that there is a stream of faith expressions among Christian ways of life, which can be detected from the incipience of the Christian movement and which is spreading rapidly and globally.<sup>15</sup> And yet they

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<sup>12</sup> Chinese Baptist Press (International) Limited – a Baptist publishing house in Hong Kong with 110 years of history, published *Ethics* in 2012 with an introduction by Curtis W. Freeman; *Doctrine* in 2013 with a preface by Parush R. Parushev, and a study reading guide to McClendon's thought by Prof. Andres Tang, Professor of Christian Thought (Theology and Culture) at the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary; *Witness* with a preface by Terry Tilley is to be published in 2014. Reflections here expand on my preface for the Chinese edition.

<sup>13</sup> For an extended treatment see my *Christianity in Europe: The way we are now* (Oxford, UK: CMS, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> McClendon, *Doctrine*, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> See his 'Primitive, Present, Future: A Vision for the Church in the Modern World', in Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The Primitive Church in the Modern World* (Erbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 98-105, and Curtis Freeman, James Wm McClendon, Jr., and C. Rosalee Velloso da Silva, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999); cf. Parushev, *Christianity in Europe*. For an investigation of some of these faith expressions, specifically in Eastern Europe, e.g. see Parush R. Parushev and Toivo Pilli, 'Protestantism in Eastern Europe to the Present Day', in Alister E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks, eds., *The Blackwell's Companion to Protestantism* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), pp. 155-60; Rollin G. Grams and Parush R. Parushev, eds., *Towards an Understanding of European Baptist Identity: Listening to the Churches in Armenia, Bulgaria, Central Asia, Moldova, North Caucasus, Omsk and Poland* (Prague, IBTS, 2006); Keith G. Jones and Ian M. Randall, eds., *Counter-cultural Communities: Baptist Life in Twentieth-*



seem confused or not interested to engage in high-academic theological discourse. McClendon investigates why this is so and what makes these story-formed and vision-led communities of faith ‘thick’.<sup>16</sup> It is evident that they hold firmly to a clear set of beliefs – sometimes too rigidly and too exclusively. Can these be a starting point for theology? *Biography as Theology* and *Convictions* give an affirmative answer to this essential question of McClendon’s investigation: Convictions can and in fact should be at the centre of an authentic baptist theological quest – the ‘staff’ of theology so to speak.

The task of an academic theologian is an important and a very serious one. It is, however, a second-order task of doctrinal theologising, which is supportive of, and necessarily related to, the primary theological work of the church itself. The two practices of church doctrine and of doctrinal theology are interdependent. Important as systematic theological thinking is, the task of academic theology is not primarily to create ideal systems of doctrinal theology for the life of the churches. In McClendon’s view, the practice of doctrinal theology ‘presupposes the church practice, investigates it, and seeks to assist it’.<sup>17</sup> Every dependable doctrinal theology therefore has a story-formed community of reference. By acknowledging this fact, authentic doctrinal theology accepts its historical conditioning, its contextual grounding, and its confessional predisposition. From such a perspective doctrinal theology is called first to define theological resources expressed in the lived-out convictions of a particular story of faith. In other words, theology as convictional discourse always begins in the middle of things in the communal moral life.<sup>18</sup> And while it is clear that starting with the moral life of the church – with ethics – may not be an essential entry point into systematic theological work, it is nonetheless a helpful one. This explains why in McClendon’s *Systematic Theology* the volume on *Ethics* precedes that on *Doctrine* chronologically (but not logically) and

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*Century Europe* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008); Ian M. Randall, *Communities of Convictions: Baptist Beginnings in Europe* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> As I have explained elsewhere: “‘Thin’ community is a virtue (or vice) excelling community. It is held together by a limited range of specific interest (e.g. a community of musicians or of academic theologians). ‘Thick’ communities are story-formed through shared life and communal language within a particular social reality. They are ‘communities of solidarity, resistance, and fellowship’”, (see my ‘Gathered, Gathering, Porous: Reflections on the nature of baptistic community’, *Baptistic Theologies* 5:1 (Spring 2013), p. 37 (pp. 35-52). Thick and thin communities necessarily overlap. Originally I introduced the distinction of ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ communities for the purpose of defining primary and secondary levels of theologising in a paper, ‘Theology for the Church: A Convictional Perspective on a Community’s Theological Discourse’ delivered at an IBTS Directors’ Conference, *The Dynamics of Primary and Secondary Theologies in Baptist Communities*, 24-28 August 2004, in Prague, unpublished manuscript. The distinction was further refined in Parushev, ‘Theologie op een baptistenmanier’, p. 7 and Parushev, ‘Baptistic Convictional Hermeneutics’, pp.184-187.

<sup>17</sup> *Doctrine*, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. xii, pp. 131-135; cf. Harvey, ‘Beginning in the Middle of Things’.

methodologically.<sup>19</sup> Doctrinal theology turns next to investigating the historic and contemporary forces driving the story of faith forward or holding it back. It tests the faithfulness of this particular story in terms of the story of Christ, and relates that story to the diverse and incoherent social conditions of the temporary setting of the church.

It is widely recognised that McClendon's theological work is carefully crafted, masterfully written<sup>20</sup> and 'most original in style and substance'.<sup>21</sup> Reading McClendon's dense prose is like reading literary classics of the American South: not surprisingly considering his upbringing in Louisiana. Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, the content of *Doctrine* (as well as of the other two volumes of the trilogy) is presented in a matrix-like structure of three parts with three chapters each and with three sub-chapters in every chapter. In a fashion remotely resembling the arrangement of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, the sections are set up in a Trinitarian pattern and can be summed up in three metaphors of the central concern of the gospel in relation to the Kingdom of God. In the alignment of the parts, McClendon reverses the order of exploration of Christian morality in *Ethics*<sup>22</sup> and moves from the divine vision to its earthly re-enactment. The first part looks at the nature of the Kingdom under the rule of God, with its politics and its community of God's people. This is an eschatological perspective governed by a depiction of the end toward which everything tends.<sup>23</sup> For McClendon, authentic Christian faith is a prophetic faith<sup>24</sup> guided by a prophetic vision. Restating his concept of the bi-focal 'baptist vision', outlined earlier in *Ethics*,<sup>25</sup> he asserts that biblical faith sees the present in correct light only when it is interpreted through the lense of God's directed past while at the same time ascribing the meaning of the present by the means of the prophetic future pointed towards in hope by the assured promises of God. The second part focuses on the nature of God as the creative source of all things, and on that of Jesus Christ as the eschatological ruler of the Kingdom, ending with an investigation of the divine and human identity of Jesus. The third part addresses the contemporary community of Christ's

<sup>19</sup> McClendon, *Ethics*, pp. 39-43.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, 'Reading James McClendon Takes Practice: Lessons in the Craft of Theology', in *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth Century Theology and Philosophy* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2001, 1997), p. 171 (pp. 171-187).

<sup>21</sup> Braaten, 'The Harvest of Evangelical Theology', p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> For didactic purposes, McClendon starts his exploration of Christian morality in *Ethics* with the organic or bodily ethics grounded upon response to environment, moves to look at corporate or communal morality, representing social practices of communal living, and to consider visionary or anastatic (eschatological) moral life that ultimately direct moral transformation. See his earlier paper, 'Three Strands of Christian Ethics', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 6:1 (1978): pp. 54-80.

<sup>23</sup> McClendon, *Doctrine*, p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> McClendon, *Ethics*, pp. 26-34.

followers – striving to live as the citizens of the Kingdom, by considering the ecclesiological dimension of life of a community inspired and empowered by the Spirit of God. The gathering community as the fellowship of the Spirit – the body of Christ, is McClendon's particular concern.<sup>26</sup> As much as for Friedrich Schleiermacher, theology is primarily a reflection on Christian experience of God (not individual and subjective but of a group), or for Karl Barth it is the study of the confession of the church in response to God's self-revelation, for McClendon theology is an investigation into how the stories of Spirit-led communities shape the very essence of the theological quest.<sup>27</sup>

Christology is the key to understanding McClendon's entire project,<sup>28</sup> which is certainly the first thorough-going systematic theology written from a non-foundational or post-liberal perspective.<sup>29</sup> He makes it clear that the location of the central section – chapter six on 'Jesus the Risen Christ' – is at the heart of this middle volume of his three-volume theological work, and it is no accident.<sup>30</sup> In this critical chapter and in the project as a whole, he resolved to enquire into the essence and validity of the Christian faith by addressing three crucial questions of identity:<sup>31</sup> What right has Jesus Christ to absolute Lordship assigned to God alone? The answer to this question, McClendon argues, reflects on our understanding of how the identity of Jesus – the man from Nazareth – intersects with that of the God of Israel. How can monotheists tell the Jesus Story as their own? The response to this second question is at the heart of any monotheistic religion. It addresses our understanding of the nature and identity of the Triune God. Inadequate answers led to actions in the past (and provoke aggravated responses in the present), that inflicted immense pain and suffering and continue troubling the relationships of the followers of monotheistic faiths. How Christ-like are disciples' lives to be? In other words, how is it possible for mere humans to follow in Jesus' steps and to perform his deeds and more (John 14:12)? The answers to these questions are vitally important for the mission of the church. They disclose our

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<sup>26</sup> McClendon's notion of gathering was further developed and expanded by Keith G. Jones in a series of works: *A Believing Church: Learning from Some Contemporary Anabaptist and Baptist Perspectives* (Didcot, UK: The Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1998); 'Towards a Model of Mission for Gathering, Intentional, Convictional Koinonia', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 4:2 (January 2004), pp.5-13; 'On Abandoning Public Worship', in Jones and Parushev, eds., *Currents in a Baptist Theology of Worship Today*, pp.7-23; 'Gathering Worship: Some tentative proposals for Reshaping Worship in Our European Baptist Churches Today', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 13:1 (September 2012), pp.5-26; cf. Parushev 'Gathered, Gathering, Porous'.

<sup>27</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, 'Theology and a Baptist way of community', in Paul Fiddes, (ed.), *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way* (Oxford, UK: Whitley Pubs., 2000), pp. 26-27 (pp. 19-38) .

<sup>28</sup> McClendon, *Doctrine*, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Barron, 'Considering the Systematic Theology of James William McClendon, Jr.', p. 267.

<sup>30</sup> McClendon, *Doctrine*, p. 238.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

perception of the relationship between the identity of God and that of Jesus Christ with the identity of Jesus' disciples and their character.<sup>32</sup> After investigating historic responses to these questions, McClendon offers answers of his own in a brilliantly constructed Christology of two narratives: that of God reaching out to people and of humanity in desperate search for God. The good news of the gospel is that the two disconnected stories are bound indivisibly together in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>33</sup> McClendon deliberately chose to place his two-narrative Christology at the heart of his theological vision.

While the breadth of the researched field and the depth of academic learning displayed in *Systematic Theology* are impressive and telling of McClendon's academic integrity, what strikes the reader most is the veracity and consistency of the use of the biblical narrative which is interwoven within his theological argumentation. This is in tune with his baptistic community of reference<sup>34</sup> whose working textbook is the storied world of the Bible, and in harmony with his narrative theological method. Such bi-lingual strategy allows him to show convincingly how pictorial biblical presentation can be systematically understood. His narrative systematisation introduces thoroughly all key theological concepts and entwines them organically with the narrative symbolic biblical *modus operandi*.

Did McClendon succeed to convince others of his convictional way of doing theology? I can say with confidence that his vision of the validity of doing theology from below as well as from above was not left to dry out. It was followed by an impressive volume of academic work in the USA. Recently Curtis Freeman has carefully researched the impact of his thought in the wider theological world<sup>35</sup> on both sides of the Atlantic, and now even in China. IBTS is one of those centres of convictional theologising among the schools of thought inspired by McClendon's theological vision at Fuller Theological Seminary, Duke University, Baylor University, the University of Dayton, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 194-195.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>34</sup> For the notion of 'baptistic' community and theology, see Grams and Parushev, eds., *Towards an Understanding of European Baptist Identity*, p.10 (pp. 175-181); cf. Parushev, 'Gathered, gathering and Porous', pp. 36-39.

<sup>35</sup> 'Introduction'. At present two research centres in Fuller Theological Seminary and Duke University are working on collecting and publishing McClendon's unpublished papers and sermons and those that have been published in obscure or not easily accessible publications.

<sup>36</sup> Here I shall refer only to the PhD dissertations drawing significantly from McClendon and successfully examined at IBTS in the recent years: Peter Smith (USA), 'The Enthrallment of Violence in Mennonite Church Discipline: An Analysis of Convictions in Terms of Peace and Ecclesial Practice' (2010); Meego Remmel (Estonia), 'Sense of Virtue in the Estonian Baptist Tradition' (2011); Lina Andronoviene (Lithuania), 'Transforming the Struggles of Tamars: Singleness in the Baptistic Communities' (2012);

My initial meeting with James McClendon and the introduction to his theological vision had profound consequences. McClendon and his wife, Professor Nancey Murphy, became my teachers in Fuller Theological Seminary. On a personal level, they attracted me, first, as brilliant philosophical theologians. Their warmth, gentle guidance, genuine care and concerns for me and my family's wellbeing soon transformed our relationship from teacher, to student, to a deep bond of loyalty and friendship. As McClendon's last doctoral student, I feel entrusted with the legacy of his thought which I highly respect and cherish. On an academic level, moving from the dry schemata of different theological systematisations to the life-and-blood theology of the church had a liberating effect on me. Doing theology McClendon's way became a much more appealing, meaningful and lively practice, albeit a demanding one. Indeed, the life of a theologian cannot be compartmentalised either in academia or in the church. It has to be holistically related to and in the service of both. The pursuits of the mind and the passions of the heart could be separated only to the detriment of one or the other. Good theology is never simply the game of the mind. It is a practice of the Christian disciple. My hope is that McClendon's theological legacy will have the same effect on a new generation of readers as it has had on me.

**The Revd Dr Parush R Parushev**, Rector, IBTS, Prague.

## Church Renewal 150 Years Ago

Ian M Randall

Recently I was preaching at the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of a Baptist church in the London area. I was fascinated to examine some of the features of evangelical church life in 1863, when this church was planted. In *Rhythms of Revival*, I suggested that the 1857-1863 transatlantic and, to some extent, global Revival (its greatest impact was probably in North America and Europe, but it had a wider reach), in which many hundreds of thousands of people came to evangelical conversion, offers important insights into evangelical renewal. This revival came in a period when the evangelical movement was playing an increasingly crucial role in the world-wide Christian community – as is also the case today.<sup>1</sup> David Bebbington shows that the years from the 1850s to the 1900s can properly be viewed as a period when evangelicalism, with its emphases on the Bible, the cross, conversion and activism, had a dominant place in Protestant Christianity.<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest that evangelicalism operated from a position of uniformity. There were theological divisions between nineteenth-century Anglicans and Nonconformists, Baptists and paedobaptists, Calvinists and Arminians. But there was a shared sense of identity. Janice Holmes has argued, on the basis of detailed research, for the ongoing existence of revival in the period, in the sense of ‘a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit’.<sup>3</sup> My own view is that the evangelical movement is, at heart, a spiritual tradition.<sup>4</sup>

In this article I will be looking at the way in which, around 1863, Baptists and other evangelicals were experiencing spiritual renewal in their church settings.

### Local church renewal

The impact of the Revival of the late 1850s on local church life in many places in North America was enormous. In New York, the Thirteenth Street

<sup>1</sup> I.M. Randall, *Rhythms of Revival: The Spiritual Awakening of 1857-1863* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2010), pp. 6-7. I am grateful to IBTS for the opportunity to present some of this material at a Wednesday Workshop.

<sup>2</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester, IVP, 2005). He has also analysed and illuminated local revivals in the Victorian era: D.W. Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Settings* (Oxford: University Press, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Janice Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland, 1859-1905* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), p. 169. For the beginnings in America see Kathryn T. Long, *The Revival of 1857-58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> See I.M. Randall, *What a Friend we have in Jesus: The Evangelical Tradition* (London: DLT, 2005).

Presbyterian Church welcomed, on one Sunday in 1858, 113 people making their first profession of faith. Another church in New York, the Mariners' Presbyterian Church, was at that time reaching people from fifty-six different nations. At the Baptist Mariners' Church in Cherry Street, New York, at which Ira Steward was pastor, from 1 January 1858 meetings were held every evening for three months and 101 people were baptised as a result. Many of the Cherry Street converts were seamen, among them men from twenty different nations. This congregation increased from 100 to 500. Churches worked together. A daily united prayer meeting was introduced through DeKalb Avenue Church – meeting alternately in the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist churches.<sup>5</sup> Baptists in North America were fully supportive of the Revival and had gained many new members by the early 1860s. It has been estimated that in 1858 alone the various Baptist bodies in North America baptised 150,000 new believers. Among the noted Baptist evangelists in the early 1860s was Jacob Knapp, who conducted powerful, extended evangelistic meetings and also preached vigorously against slavery, and A.B. Earle, whose evangelistic work crossed over denominational boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

Across the Atlantic, many local churches in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales were deeply affected by the Revival of this period. A good example in Ireland was Great George's Street, a Presbyterian church in Belfast. Thomas Toye, the minister, who was one of the leaders in the Revival, founded the congregation at Great George's Street in 1842, and was minister there for twenty-seven years. He began his work with meetings in a loft. After the Revival began to take effect, the Great George's Street building had to be enlarged. Toye wrote that when 'news of the great awakening in America reached Ireland' he decided to commence a daily prayer meeting 'for an outpouring of the Spirit in my congregation', and this began in April 1858. Initially attendance was small, but in June conversions began and at the end of the month, when a huge revival meeting was held in the Botanic Gardens, Belfast, Toye considered that 'the glorious work may be said to have commenced with power in the congregation'. A girl in the congregation gave testimony at one meeting and then added the words, 'Come to Jesus'. The effect was like an electric shock. Congregations soon grew until people were meeting in the street and in a garden by the church.<sup>7</sup> The movement of renewal in this congregation

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<sup>5</sup> These details are from W.C. Conant, *Narratives of Remarkable Conversions and Revival Incidents* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1858), pp. 417-423.

<sup>6</sup> J. Edwin Orr, *The Fervent Prayer: The Worldwide Impact of the Great Awakening of 1858* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 41-2.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Toye, 'Great St George's Street, Belfast', in W. Reid, ed., *Authentic Records of Revival, Now in Progress in the United Kingdom* (London: James Nisbet & Co.: 1860), pp. 113-115.

through into the 1860s owed a great deal to prayer, to ministerial leadership, to lay participation and to young people.

An example of renewal in a local setting in Scotland was in the village community of Chapel of Garioch, Aberdeenshire. Here the Free Church of Scotland minister, George Bain, was concerned about the 'dead and low spiritual state of the Church', as he put it, and he considered in 1857 that without revival the already worrying spiritual situation would be 'very poor' in ten years time. When news of revival in America and Ireland came to Scotland, Bain made a point of visiting Ireland. His reports contributed to local revival. Bain described how in his own church 'the good news of the revival in America tended greatly to cheer us'. This movement was frequently mentioned in services and prayer meetings. News from Ireland similarly stimulated the congregation, to the extent that they saw God's 'glorious marching' towards Scotland. In the light of this dramatic vision of God, said Bain, 'we set ourselves accordingly to welcome and receive him'. Another prayer meeting was started in the church. It was when Bain was away in Ireland, in July 1859, that revival came to his congregation. Spiritual awakening was evident in a group of young girls at a local school. Revival came to the church, with those converted generally 'obtaining peace in waiting on the Lord Jesus in the course of from one to four weeks'.<sup>8</sup> The effect continued. Kenneth Jeffrey has studied the ongoing effect of this revival in the North East of Scotland.<sup>9</sup>

In Wales, many congregations of all denominations were affected in the same period. A report from Beaumaris on the Isle of Anglesey, North Wales is typical. In later 1858 a movement began in the Independent Chapel. The news of the awakening within the chapel soon spread throughout the town, 'and all classes attended the services, expecting still further manifestations of the Spirit's power'. It seemed to those who participated as if 'a nation had been born in a day'. There were conversions and those who had lost their spiritual devotion were restored. All the Dissenting congregations in the town 'received large measures of the Divine influence'. The sense of renewal in these communities continued. It was reported that 'upwards of one hundred and eighty persons have been added to their Communion'. One particular case was highlighted in this report. A profoundly deaf young man of twenty-two asked for church fellowship and came to the church members' meeting. In this period in Britain the establishment of schools for the deaf was only just beginning. Very few teachers were available. Most deaf people did not have any

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<sup>8</sup> *A Report of a Conference on the State of Religion and Public Meeting, held in the Free Church, Huntly, January 5, 1860* (Huntly, Aberdeenshire, 1860).

<sup>9</sup> K.S. Jeffrey, *When the Lord Walked the Land* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002).



access to schooling and they were usually unable to learn to speak or to communicate through sign language – hence the term ‘deaf and dumb’. Many deaf people were regarded as hardly rational. The Beaumaris correspondent was at pains to highlight this young man’s conversion. Normally a testimony would have been given at the church meeting but it seems it was not possible for this young man to communicate to the members. His parents, who were already church members, were present. The report highlighted the non-verbal communication which took place. ‘No words could pass... they could only look at each other, but in that *look* there were volumes of astonishment, sympathy, and love!’<sup>10</sup> Renewal was breaking down barriers.

In London this period saw significant Baptist church development and growth. Outreach which began in Wandsworth, south-east London, in 1859, brought into being East Hill Baptist Church. Under John W. Genders, the young pastor, meetings began in the Assembly Rooms of the Spread Eagle Tavern and by the mid-1860s the membership was over 150, with many more attending. A chapel was erected costing the large sum for the time of £3,000.<sup>11</sup> An inn was also used as a venue in Bromley, Kent, where Baptist meetings were started in 1862 in the Assembly Rooms of the White Hart. Archibald G. Brown, aged nineteen and at that time still a student at C.H. Spurgeon’s Pastors’ College, saw the Bromley congregations grow from about 30 to 200 in a year. In 1863 a church was formed with twenty members and two years later it was reported that a large chapel was being erected.<sup>12</sup> The East London Tabernacle, Stepney Green, which became the second largest Baptist church in London (after Spurgeon’s Metropolitan Tabernacle), met initially in the Beaumont Hall, Mile End Road. Student preachers built up the East London Tabernacle to 200 people in the early 1860s, and a chapel seating 800 was erected in 1864. Archibald Brown moved from Bromley to the East London Tabernacle and under his ministry Sunday evening congregations (which in churches of this period were always larger than Sunday morning congregations) soon grew to 1,200 people, with a membership in 1868 numbering 500.<sup>13</sup>

There were also effects in rural areas of England. The Baptist congregation in the village of Earls Colne, in Essex, which was formed in

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Phillips, *The Welsh Revival: Its Origin and Development* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995, reprint of 1860), pp. 79-80.

<sup>11</sup> *Outline of the Lord’s Work by the Pastors’ College*, 1867 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1868), p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> *The Sword and the Trowel*, March 1865, p. 130.

<sup>13</sup> *Outline of the Lord’s Work*, 1868, p. 21; *East London Tabernacle* (London: East London Tabernacle, 1956). For a biography of Brown see: I.H. Murray, *Archibald G. Brown: Spurgeon’s Successor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2011).

1786, experienced considerable growth as a result of a period of 'awakening'. In the 1850s the church was in decline. Although the chapel building could seat 400 people, in 1859 there were only forty-two members. For some time there was no settled pastor for the congregation, but through the recommendation of C.H. Spurgeon, G.H. Griffith came to preach for two months. The account of the church's experiences states that 'a great spiritual awakening commenced among the Church and congregation, and Mr Griffith received and accepted a unanimous call to the pastorate'. Prayer and powerful preaching went together. Private houses in the community were opened for prayer, and preaching services were held in neighbouring villages. Soon the chapel was too small for the numbers attending and a new chapel, seating 750, was erected. Griffith deposited in the stone that marked the foundation of the building a Bible, a catechism and hymn-books by Isaac Watts and John Rippon. Earls Colne was, by the early 1860s, the largest Baptist chapel in Essex.<sup>14</sup> Local growth was a direct result of the wider movement of spiritual renewal of the period.

### Renewal in singing

The way in which hymn-books were placed alongside the Bible in the Earls Colne chapel highlights how, along with preaching, hymn-singing was at the heart of the renewal of communal evangelical spirituality in this period of church growth. In America and Britain the many prayer meetings that took place in local churches of all denominations always included hymn-singing. During the first phase of the Revival many existing and well-loved hymns, especially those by Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, were sung with new devotion. Such words as 'My chains fell off, my heart was free' expressed a deep sense of spiritual liberation. At a Calvinistic Methodist meeting in Breconshire, in Wales, held on a week-day evening, the gathering experienced a powerful event in which the young people could not stop singing, and it is significant that hymn tunes which were described as 'cold, formal', were not used.<sup>15</sup> On one occasion at Great George's Street Church in Belfast, in the garden beside the church, people continued praying and singing until five o'clock in the morning. Reports suggested that out of the 800 people who professed conversion during the revival in Great George's Street Church, forty were converted on that night alone.<sup>16</sup>

J. Denham Smith, a minister near Dublin, spoke of a range of newer and very personal hymns that had been important in the churches he knew. The titles included 'Jesus is mine', 'Joyfully, joyfully onward we go', 'Just

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<sup>14</sup> T. Henson, *Centennial Memorials of the Baptist Church in Earls Colne* (Earls Colne, 1886), pp. 12-14.

<sup>15</sup> Phillips, *Welsh Revival*, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> Toye, 'Great St George's Street, Belfast', in Reid, ed., *Authentic Records of Revival*, pp. 114-115.

now, He will save you', and 'He breaks the power of cancell'd sin'. Smith argued that a time of spiritual life and growth always included new zeal in singing, citing the experiences of Martin Luther, John Calvin, the Wesleys and George Whitefield. Smith gave, as an example of the power of hymnody, a conversion arising out of the singing of the hymn, 'Now I have found a friend, Jesus is mine.' Smith had asked one of the young people in his congregation if she could say 'Jesus is mine'. She admitted that this affirmation was not possible. Initially it seemed that she had no hope that this would change. Smith, for his part, prayed that within one hour (in a meeting in his church) she would be able to say 'Jesus is mine'. As she struggled, another hymn was sung – the often-used 'There is a fountain filled with blood'. The young woman identified herself with the dying thief in the hymn, who found that his sin was forgiven. Finally, Smith observed, 'the blackness of despair' gave way to 'peace and joy', and the young lady said: 'Now I can say, "Jesus is mine". I have a hold of my Saviour now.'<sup>17</sup> A gospel hymn was central to this instance of conversion.

The popular weekly, *The Revival*, recognised the importance of the place of singing not only in certain specific settings – for example in Wales, the Land of Song – but in all the areas touched by the Revival. The newer, shorter songs that were seen as characterising many churches touched by the Revival were circulated widely. Among these were 'O happy day that fixed my choice', which was published in *The Revival* in 1861. Elizabeth Codner, who lived in London, in a poem published in 1860 and then widely sung in meetings, spoke of hearing of 'showers of blessing' that God was 'scattering full and free' and which were 'the thirsty land refreshing'. The hope was that this would be the personal experience of those who sang this new hymn.<sup>18</sup> It is certainly the case that the real revolution in sung worship in many evangelical churches came through the 'gospel songs' that were used in the campaigns of D.L. Moody and his co-evangelist and singer Ira D. Sankey. But the roots of much of the new music lay in the early 1860s. For example, one of the most prolific of the gospel song-writers was Philipp Bliss of Chicago, who had been deeply stirred by the preaching of a British evangelist, Henry Moorhouse, in Manchester. Moorhouse, as was often the case in his preaching, was speaking about John 3:16. Bliss began writing songs in the early 1860s and subsequently wrote a hymn based on this theme: 'Whosoever heareth, shout, shout the sound...Whosoever will may come'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> J. Denham Smith, 'Times of Refreshing', in Reid, ed., *Authentic Record of Revival*, pp. 315-17.

<sup>18</sup> J. Edwin Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1949), p. 95.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

One unusual song of the later 1850s and early 1860s was ‘What’s the news’, which was written by a young Scotsman and which was widely sung in churches in North America and in Ireland. When it was first introduced in America, in Philadelphia, a report stated that the effect was ‘thrilling’.

Where’er we meet, you always say, What’s the news? What’s the news?  
Pray, what’s the order of the day? What’s the news? What’s the news?  
Oh! I have got good news to tell; My Saviour hath done all things well,  
And triumphed over death and hell, That’s the news! That’s the news!

The Lamb was slain on Calvary, That’s the news! That’s the news!  
To set a world of sinners free, That’s the news! That’s the news!  
‘Twas there His precious blood was shed, ‘Twas there He bowed His sacred head;  
But now He’s risen from the dead, That’s the news! That’s the news!

The hymn continued – over the course of seven verses in all – with many more exclamation marks (six per verse) to celebrate conversions, assurance, and happiness. It finished on a prayerful and also a triumphant note: ‘And now, if anyone should say, What’s the news? What’s the news? Oh, tell them you’ve begun to pray – That’s the news! That’s the news! That you have joined the conquering band, And now with joy at God’s command, You’re marching to the better land – That’s the news! That’s the news!’<sup>20</sup> Such songs had little merit as poetry, and did not survive beyond a generation, but they expressed in an immediate way the spiritual feeling of the times.

## **The Lord’s Supper and the Renewal of Worship**

Another aspect of worship which was important in this period of renewal was the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. At a local church gathering in Trevecca, Wales, in 1859, a report stated that the ‘sacrament of the Lord’s Supper’ was celebrated and ‘an influence was felt by all present, which we had never experienced in the like manner before’. The minister of this chapel spoke to the people and there was, it was reported, ‘a beauty, a loveliness about the Holy Word which we had never hitherto perceived’. After a time of deep emotion, those present took the bread and wine but in the singing of the last hymn they found that it seemed impossible to bring the meeting to an end. The last two lines of this hymn were sung for a quarter of an hour. The minister prayed, ‘and such a prayer we had never before heard uttered. We felt that we were communing with God. Our hearts were truly poured out in praises and supplications. We could have prayed all night. But at length the prayer terminated, and we were to

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<sup>20</sup> Conant, *Narratives of Remarkable Conversions*, pp. 397-8.

separate. But did we separate? Ah, no, every one resumed his seat and kept silence, and there we were for a length of time under the most heavenly feelings.' The meeting continued for four hours. It was described by those present as a kind of Pentecost.<sup>21</sup> This kind of event was to affect the way in which the Lord's Supper was regarded.

William Arthur, a Methodist leader who visited Ireland during the Revival, noted the importance of Holy Communion for spiritual renewal. Among the Presbyterian churches at that time the Lord's Supper was administered only twice a year. In Ballymena, the 'Spring Communion' in 1858 came at a time (Arthur noted) when the parish had been more or less filled with news of the prayers for revival that were being offered, 'and of the strange, clear, happy conversions which had taken place' – conversions which made those who had been changed go on their way 'walking, and leaping, and praising God'. As the congregation preparing for Communion heard more about Revival in America and about the need for revival, it was clear that a deeper spiritual work was taking place – during, as Arthur emphasised, the 'solemn services of the Communion'. Many spiritual experiences were expressed in this period of Communion, including 'strong crying and tears, nights spent in wrestling prayer, hearts heavy, and faces mournful with the burden of sin'. Some in the parish were busy 'telling as simply as babes, and as happily as primitive Christians, of God's pardoning love'. As a Methodist, Arthur was impressed that these 'staid Presbyterian folk' were entering into these varied and often emotional experiences.<sup>22</sup>

In Scotland, in the late 1850s and on into the 1860s, the special seasons of Communion were similarly often highly significant. For example, the Free Church of Scotland minister in Banchory Ternan, Aberdeenshire, who saw a number of people 'awakened and changed', and saw these people become the means of 'awakening others', spoke of the way in which one Communion was felt by many to be 'a very solemn season to their souls'. Additional Communion seasons were then planned – anything from two-day to five-day events, sometimes with open-air preaching – since the church leaders believed in their power to 'have a beneficial effect and serve to advance the Lord's work in our midst'. Another Free Church minister in the same region, George Bain, had a similar experience, with his church records noting 'a truly wonderful awakening' which took place at a special Communion. More communicants joined the church than had done so in the previous nine years. At one Communion – which was arranged 'specially in connection

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<sup>21</sup> Phillips, *Welsh Revival*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>22</sup> J. Weir, *The Ulster Awakening: Its Origin, Progress, and Fruit* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, and Co., 1860), p. 21.

with the blessed work' (revival) – fifty new communicants were added.<sup>23</sup> The heightened sense of God's presence at the Communion season seems to have led in some cases to a desire for more frequent celebration.

A movement in this period which placed great emphasis on frequent – weekly – observance of the Lord's Supper was the Brethren movement. The terminology used by them for Communion was the 'Breaking of Bread'. Although there were worries among leaders of the Revival about the Exclusive Brethren, led by J.N. Darby, the Open Brethren were, on the whole, well accepted in Revival circles. The new converts of the Revival were often open to new ideas and one of the ideas promoted by the Brethren was that in the early Church believers met each week to 'break bread'. At the Breaking of Bread meetings there was openness to participation and there was often a spiritually intense atmosphere, and this was attractive to those who felt constricted by classic ministerial approaches to church leadership. For example, William McLean, a Baptist in Peterhead in the North-East of Scotland, left his church as a result of a local awakening – possibly the preacher was Jessie MacFarlane, who began her ministry in 1862 – and established a Brethren assembly. Such converts to the Brethren influenced others. David Rae, an Irish evangelist, spoke of how he had embraced the practice of weekly Breaking of Bread by reading the New Testament, although in fact he had learned this from McLean.<sup>24</sup>

C.H. Spurgeon, in his views about the conduct of church services, was not an admirer of the Brethren.<sup>25</sup> He criticised their approach to Bible study, suggesting that their priorities in biblical interpretation were misguided. 'Plymouth Brethren', he told the students, 'delight to fish up some hitherto undiscovered tadpole of interpretation and cry it around town as a rare dainty. Let us be content with more ordinary and more wholesome fishery.'<sup>26</sup> However, Spurgeon did share with the Brethren a commitment to weekly Communion. Preaching at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861, Spurgeon described past Communion services in 'the darkness of the catacombs of Rome, where only a tiny taper afforded light', and in the present time in 'the far-off isles of the sea'. I may say, he declared in dramatic style, 'O sacred Eucharist, thou hast the dew of thy youth'.<sup>27</sup> The use of the term Eucharist – very unusual for Baptists – suggests a 'high' view of the Lord's Supper. Spurgeon affirmed his belief 'in the real

<sup>23</sup> Jeffery, *When the Lord Walked the Land*, p. 134.

<sup>24</sup> T. Grass, *Gathering to His Name* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2006), pp. 117-120; N.T.R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland, 1838-2000* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> See I.M. Randall, "'Ye men of Plymouth": C.H. Spurgeon and the Brethren', in T. Grass, ed., *Witness in Many Lands* (Troon: Brethren Archivists & Historians Network, 2013), pp. 73-90.

<sup>26</sup> *The Sword and the Trowel*, July 1869, p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Lord's Supper', *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 50, Sermon delivered in the autumn of 1861, p. 101.

presence, but not in the corporeal presence' of Christ in the Supper. 'We believe', he said, 'that Jesus Christ spiritually comes to us and refreshes us, and in that sense we eat his flesh and drink his blood.'<sup>28</sup> Spurgeon's conviction that Christ was present among his people as they took bread and wine was also expressed in the Communion hymn which Spurgeon wrote in 1866:

Amidst us our beloved stands,  
And bids us view His pierced hands.  
Points to His wounded feet and side,  
Blest emblems of the Crucified.

In a sermon delivered in 1866, 'The Lord's Supper, Simple but Sublime!', Spurgeon spoke about the impossibility of celebrating alone. 'I must have you with me', he said, 'I cannot do without you'. The group celebrating, however, might be only five or six. Spurgeon referred to Communion services of this kind in which he had participated, as well as to the huge Communion services at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.<sup>29</sup> Renewal of communal spirituality was associated with the Lord's Supper.

It has often been thought that the trend towards more frequent Communion in the Church of England in the nineteenth century was attributable to High Church, Anglo-Catholic influences. But significant Anglican evangelical leaders were in favour of frequent Communion.<sup>30</sup> At a time when many Anglican churches had a quarterly Communion service, a number of Anglican evangelical leaders who were committed to reaching the working classes advocated at least a monthly celebration of Holy Communion and also introduced evening Communion. Many people in domestic service worked during the day on Sundays and could only attend in the evenings.<sup>31</sup> The need for the churches to minister to them was accentuated in the 1860s. The Earl of Shaftesbury was one prominent evangelical social reformer who called for Anglican ministers to administer Communion on Sunday evenings so that the poor could attend. He was highly critical of the conservatism of some Anglican clergy, for example in his statement: 'Now if it were given out by a large body of the ministers of the Church that they would administer the Communion in the evening, many of the poor with whom we have to deal would be likely to attend; but if it is to be given out that the ministers of the Church of England will never

<sup>28</sup> 'The Witness of the Lord's Supper', *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 59, undated sermon, p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Lord's Supper, Simple but Sublime', *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 55, sermon delivered 1866, pp. 316-18.

<sup>30</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, Vol. 1: From Cranmer to Hooker 1534-1603* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 223.

<sup>31</sup> Nigel Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age, 1789-1901* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), pp. 352-4.

consider their convenience and necessities, they will certainly stay away from the churches altogether.’<sup>32</sup> Renewal included more frequent Communion in many local church services.

## Renewal of Women’s Ministry

It has often been asserted that in the Victorian period in Britain the concept of ‘separate spheres’ was given prominence,<sup>33</sup> with the home seen as the domain of women. However, many Victorian women felt a calling from God to Christian service and could be found visiting poor areas of cities or towns, selling Bibles, perhaps offering access to nursing care, and giving spiritual counsel. In 1857 Ellen Ranyard pioneered the ministry of working-class women through founding the London Bible Domestic and Female Mission, and by 1867 this employed 234 women who reached into areas far removed from much church life.<sup>34</sup> Although this kind of work was applauded, there was limited support within the churches for the idea of women as preachers. In Methodism in the mid-nineteenth century there were some who were active preachers, such as Mary Clarissa Buck, a Primitive Methodist. Miss Buck’s preaching was popular and she travelled vast distances taking special services.<sup>35</sup> Her work attracted the attention of Spurgeon, who trained ‘Bible women’ as local evangelists,<sup>36</sup> and on one occasion he asked Danzy Sheen, a Primitive Methodist who was a student at Spurgeon’s College in the 1860s, about Miss Buck. Sheen had heard her preaching and gave Spurgeon an account of the sermon. Spurgeon expressed admiration for what he considered an intellectual discourse, describing this as ‘masculine’, but added that he did not think intellectual preaching won most people to Christ.<sup>37</sup>

The 1860s saw greater involvement of lay evangelists in the ministry of evangelical churches and this helped churches to affirm that women as well as men could be used by God. Phoebe and Walter Palmer played an influential role in this period. Walter Palmer was a doctor and his wife Phoebe had become a leader in devotional meetings in New York in the 1830s. These became known as the ‘Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion

<sup>32</sup> E. Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, KG (London: Cassell & Co., 1888), p. 743.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion see Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1993), pp. 383-414.

<sup>34</sup> F.K. Prochaska, ‘Body and Soul: Bible Nurses and the Poor in Victorian London’, *Historical Review*, Vol. 60 (1987), pp. 336-48.

<sup>35</sup> E.D. Graham, ‘Chosen by God: The Female Travelling Preachers of Early Primitive Methodism’, in T. Macquiban, ed., *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, Westminster Wesley Series, No. 2 (Cambridge: Applied Theology Press, 1994), pp. 85-98.

<sup>36</sup> *The Sword and the Trowel*, January 1865, p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> D. Sheen, *Pastor C.H. Spurgeon* (London: J.B. Knapp, 1892), p. 80.



of Holiness'.<sup>38</sup> In 1857 the Palmers became involved in a Revival in Ontario, Canada, with Phoebe as the principal speaker and apologist.<sup>39</sup> She wrote defending the ministry of women: her vision was of lay ministry – in which 'all Christ's disciples, whether male or female', would, as she put it in 1859, 'be endowed with the gift of prophecy, to proclaim 'Christ crucified'. She particularly associated this development with the 'last days' before the return of Christ. One of the last publications she produced, *The Tongue of Fire on the Daughters of the Lord*, reiterated this position.<sup>40</sup> Another couple prominent in the 1860s, in England, was Grattan and Fanny Guinness, who encouraged and trained many evangelists and missionaries. Fanny, spoke bluntly of ministers who were 'useless or worse than useless in the work of soul saving and preach for years without being instrumental in a single conversion', and suggested that there was a case for women's ministry. Janice Holmes comments: 'Biblical restrictions became unimportant; it was simply a case of who was better at saving souls.'<sup>41</sup>

An example of a woman preacher within Anglican churches in the 1860s was Geraldine Hooper (later Dening), who assisted William Haslam, a clergyman and an effective evangelist, in his work at Trinity Church, Bath, and later in East Anglia. Hooper, who was the daughter of one of the minor landed gentry of Somerset, began to preach in 1862.<sup>42</sup> Within Anglicanism the ministry of women in this way was highly controversial. When Hooper arrived in East Anglia an Anglican clergyman's wife who had been praying for revival wrote to Haslam to say that if this was revival it had come in such a way that she could not thank God for it. Haslam wrote this about the visit of Geraldine to the rectory at Buckenham in Norfolk in 1863: 'When it was known that she would speak at the barn meeting in the evening, the people came out in crowds, and the place was filled in every corner.' He spoke about her address as 'like kindling a fresh flame'. One newspaper editor was violently opposed, but Haslam noted that his 'fierce and long articles' did not stamp out the fire of revival but rather 'added fuel to it'.<sup>43</sup> Haslam was linked with the holiness movement, and female preaching in the 1860s owed a great deal to holiness leaders like

<sup>38</sup> M.E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980), pp. 26-45.

<sup>39</sup> Orr, *The Fervent Prayer*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>40</sup> Phoebe Palmer, *The Promise of the Father; Or, a Neglected Spirituality of the Last Days* (Boston, 1859); Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky), p. 53; Long, *The Revival of 1857-58*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>41</sup> Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland*, p. 110.

<sup>42</sup> For Hooper see Fanny Guinness: '*She Spoke of Him*': *Being Recollections... of the late Mrs Henry Dening* (Bristol: W. Mack, 1872).

<sup>43</sup> William Haslam, *Yet not I: Or More Years of Ministry* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1882), p. 163.

Phoebe Palmer.<sup>44</sup> Bebbington shows the centrality of the Mildmay conferences, led by the Anglican, William Pennefather, to the development of a British holiness movement in the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> Haslam was a regular speaker at the Mildmay conferences. An order of Deaconesses emerged from Mildmay. Geraldine Hooper inspired other women, such as Matilda Bass, who was not sympathetic to women preaching but when she heard the stylish Geraldine speaking in 1867 with ‘intense earnestness and enthusiasm’ her views changed. She herself became a preacher.<sup>46</sup>

Among the Brethren, a movement not generally associated with women preachers throughout much of the twentieth century, there were several women who preached, in Scotland in particular, in the 1860s. Perhaps the best known was Jessie MacFarlane, who had been brought up as a Presbyterian. Jessie began to preach in 1862 in Edinburgh as a result of encouragement from a Brethren evangelist, Gordon Forlong. A year later Forlong wrote a pamphlet in defence of women preaching. Subsequently Jessie MacFarlane herself wrote her *Scriptural Warrant for Women to Preach the Gospel*. She extended her own preaching from Scotland to the English Midlands and to London. Another female preacher from the Brethren in this period was Isabella Armstrong from Ireland, who had begun preaching during the Revival in 1859 in County Tyrone. She continued her ministry in Lanarkshire, and in 1866 wrote a pamphlet, *Plea for Modern Prophetesses*. Two other Brethren preachers, Mary Hamilton and Mary Paterson, were working-class women from Lanarkshire who were converted during the Revival period and who preached in Brethren assemblies in this area of Scotland.<sup>47</sup>

It was during this period of revival (on 8 January 1860) that Catherine Booth announced that she was going to preach. In a Methodist New Connexion Chapel, Catherine ‘felt the Spirit come’ and asked to ‘say a word’. Earlier, at the age of twenty-six, she had come to the conclusion that there was a need for the liberation of women.<sup>48</sup> William and Catherine Booth conducted powerful evangelistic meetings in the 1860s and their Salvation Army was the most significant organisation in this period to foster the use of female preaching. Catherine had been inspired by Phoebe Palmer, and a pamphlet, *Female Ministry*, written in 1861 by Catherine as a

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<sup>44</sup> Olive Anderson, ‘Women preachers in mid-Victorian Britain: Some reflections on feminism, popular religion and social change’, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 12 (1969), p. 477.

<sup>45</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 159.

<sup>46</sup> Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland*, pp. 116-19.

<sup>47</sup> Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland*, pp. 74-7.

<sup>48</sup> N.H. Murdoch, ‘Female Ministry in the Thought and Work of Catherine Booth’, *Church History*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1984), pp. 348-362.

reply to an independent minister, A.A. Rees, defended Palmer's ministry.<sup>49</sup> In the early 1860s, part of the Booths' growing operation in the East End of London was a team of twelve women called the 'Christian Female Pioneers', led by Eliza Collingridge. One of the original group, Caroline Reynolds, spoke of the sensation the team caused.<sup>50</sup> The women came from a variety of backgrounds – Janice Holmes has identified a candle factory worker, a former barmaid, a rag sorter, a domestic servant and a staymaker. Many began ministry when they were in their teens. A few became particularly well known. 'Happy' Eliza Haynes was famous in Nottingham for driving through the city on top of a carriage while throwing tracts to the people and also – which must have been difficult to do at the same time – playing the fiddle.<sup>51</sup>

This is not to say that the women felt confident in their work or that the congregations always had confidence in them – at least at first. In Poplar, East London, Annie Davis' impact on one Salvation Army group was overwhelming. Initially they all left. However, her obituary described Davis as the first of 'a new order of feminine leaders who developed capacity to get together and manage a congregation and society, as well as preach to it'.<sup>52</sup> Pamela Shepherd, one of William Booth's earliest workers, had been abandoned by her husband, had lost her job as a rag sorter, and had attempted to commit suicide. When he suggested she take on pioneering she was horrified. Yet her preaching proved attractive. These women influenced others. Rose Clapham, a staymaker, showed initial suspicion about female preaching, but was impressed that the preacher she heard, Annie Davis, wore slippers and not boots and so was judged to be a 'real lady'. Her views changed and she, too, at the age of sixteen, became a preacher. During Rose Clapham's subsequent ministry she experienced considerable hardship, including being arrested, but in Barnsley, Yorkshire, she and her co-worker, Jenney Smith, attracted hundreds of coal miners to their meetings and built up a congregation of 140 members.<sup>53</sup>

## Denominational effects

In world-wide terms, Methodist churches probably gained most from the Revival of this period. Methodist growth in Australia, for example, was massive – the increase was 300 per cent in fifteen years.<sup>54</sup> William Taylor,

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, 'Women preachers in mid-Victorian Britain', pp. 480-1.

<sup>50</sup> *War Cry*, 4 September 1886, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland*, pp. 120-1.

<sup>52</sup> Typewritten obituary of Annie Davies, cited in Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland*, p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>54</sup> Orr, *The Fervent Prayer*, p. 92.

a Methodist, who like John Wesley saw the world as his parish, was probably the most significant evangelist. Taylor worked for seven years in California as a self-supporting missionary, concentrating on the needs of Chinese immigrants and on the poor. He then moved to the Eastern States of America and was involved in the Revival.<sup>55</sup> Sensing a call to international ministry, he moved to Australia in 1863. After seeing dramatic response to his preaching in Australia, Taylor travelled to South Africa, where he was dismayed by the small Methodist congregations he found. He preached to Xhosa congregations on 'receiving power' when the Holy Spirit comes, and in subsequent months many thousands of people professed conversion. Taylor described the power of the Spirit in the meetings as greater than he had ever experienced before. The Xhosa people gave him the name 'Isikuni Sivutayo', the 'Blazing Firebrand'. When he left southern Africa Taylor spoke of seeing 8,000 converts, the vast majority African.<sup>56</sup> In addition to America, England, Australia, and South Africa, Taylor preached in Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Ceylon, New Zealand, India, parts of Central America, Brazil, Peru and Chile.

Across the Church of England and the other Episcopal Communion – in Scotland, Ireland and Wales – opinion about the Revival within the Churches' leadership was divided. The Bishop of Hereford, R.D. Hampden, was one of those who attacked what was happening in the Revival as 'savouring of John Wesley'. For him this was a reason to oppose it, but for other Anglicans it was a commendation. It seems that a quarter of a million converts were gathered into church life by the evangelicals in the Church of England.<sup>57</sup> Eugene Stock of the Church Missionary Society, who was fully behind the Revival, suggested that if Anglican clergy had more fully embraced the Revival, its effects in the life of the Church would have been greater.<sup>58</sup> One significant Anglican development was that T.P. Boulton, an Anglican evangelical scholar who was a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, urged fellow-Anglican evangelicals to set up a new evangelical theological college. St. Aidan's, Birkenhead, already existed, but it was an important step forward for Anglican evangelicals when, in 1863, a College was opened in the London area. It began in St John's Hall, Highbury, with Boulton as Principal, and soon went from one initial student to 50-60 students. By the end of the nineteenth century, St John's (or the London College of Divinity, as it became) had trained over 700 students, most of

<sup>55</sup> David Bundy, article on Taylor, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October 1994, pp. 172-6.

<sup>56</sup> William Taylor, *Christian Adventures in South Africa* (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1876), pp. 2-3, 94-8, 451; cf. D. Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 172.

<sup>57</sup> Orr, *The Fervent Prayer*, p. 80.

<sup>58</sup> E. Stock, *My Recollections* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1909), pp. 82-3.

them for Anglican ministry.<sup>59</sup> Renewal gave impetus to new initiatives in training clergymen.

The Baptist equivalent of St John's was the Pastor's College, founded by C.H. Spurgeon in 1856. Like St John's, it began with one student, and grew rapidly. At the time of Spurgeon's death in 1892, the number of students who had been trained at the College numbered 863, and 627 of them were serving in the Baptist denomination as pastors, missionaries and evangelists. More than 90,000 people had been baptised in churches led by former students at the College. Over half the new churches founded within the Baptist denomination in the period 1865 to 1887 were as a result of the activities of Spurgeon and the students of the College.<sup>60</sup> Baptists probably gained more new members than any other denomination as a result of the Revival of the late 1850s and early 1860s. Of the quarter of a million church members in Baptist churches in England and Wales in 1865, it was reckoned that 100,000 had come to faith in Christ as a result of the Revival. In 1868 the Home Mission Society reported that 'not a single church had been without additions'. There was stress on the role of the local church but there was also wider involvement in the Revival by Baptists, with Baptist Noel acting as one of the Revival's main spokesmen.<sup>61</sup> It is also possible that the spirit of cooperation evident in the Revival affected Baptist denominational identity. The *Baptist Magazine* noted in 1868: 'The isolation which has so long characterized our body is yielding fast to a general growth of Christian love.'<sup>62</sup>

In the north of Ireland, one-third of the population belonged to Presbyterian churches, and the impact among this community was massive. William Gibson, a Presbyterian minister, wrote a book about a year in the story of the Revival – *The Year of Grace*. Gibson, as a Professor of Christian Ethics and Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, was someone whose opinion carried considerable weight. He noted that at the first Communion of the Revival period over 10,000 new communicants were added to Presbyterian churches, and many others who had lapsed from the churches were restored. He then adds twenty-five pages of detailed reports from local congregations.<sup>63</sup> In Scotland, adherents of the three main branches of Presbyterianism – the Church of Scotland, the Free Church and the United

<sup>59</sup> See K. Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), p. 183.

<sup>60</sup> *Annual Paper*, 1891-92, p. 12; M. Nicholls, *C.H. Spurgeon: The Pastor Evangelist* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society), p. 99.

<sup>61</sup> J.H.Y. Briggs, *English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), pp. 300-1.

<sup>62</sup> *The Baptist Magazine*, November 1868, p. 689.

<sup>63</sup> William Gibson, *The Year of Grace: A History of the Ulster Revival of 1859* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliott, 1860), pp. 404-29.

Presbyterians – comprised over two-thirds of the total population of three million. The main stream of the Revival in Scotland was within the Presbyterian churches, although there were itinerant lay preachers in Scotland whose sympathies were interdenominational. The number of converts in Scotland was estimated at 300,000.<sup>64</sup>

In Wales, the bulk of the population adhered to the various branches of Nonconformity, or Evangelical Dissent. The Calvinistic Methodist Church, the Congregationalists, the Baptists and the Wesleyan Methodists gained, between them, about 90,000 new members during the initial period of the Revival. The effect of the Revival on Baptists was profound and long-lasting. In 1859 the wider Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales met at Aberdare during the Revival and, as well as affirming the Revival, those present drew particular inspiration from what they heard was happening in Wales and also in Ireland. Their report spoke about an open-air meeting near their Assembly meetings which attracted 15,000 people. Within two years the Congregationalists in the county of Carnarvon alone had built twenty new chapels because of the influx of new people. John Angel James, at Carr's Lane, an influential Congregational church in Birmingham, was one of the leading advocates of the Revival within Congregationalism. In 1860 Congregational reports spoke of 'a remarkable revival of religion in the north of Ireland' and of Wales being 'visited to an extraordinary degree'.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

I have tried to explore some of the dynamics at work in the early-to-mid 1860s in congregations and wider church groups that felt the impact of the Revival of the period. What seems to have characterised those communities that were reconfigured by renewal was a greater openness to the immediate presence of God in prayer and worship. Along with this there was a new stimulus in the area of outreach to those in the wider community. In the singing, which was a feature of this period of renewal, both older hymns and new songs were used to express what God had done. There was also an openness to what God would do. In many churches there was a renewed sense of the presence of God in the celebration of Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper. A further feature of this period of renewal which I have examined is the role of women as preachers and leaders. A number of the holiness movement's leaders, such as Phoebe Palmer and then Catherine Booth, gave encouragement to women. This was also part of a wider trend to emphasise lay ministry. I have not given attention here to the ministry of

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<sup>64</sup> Orr, *Second Evangelical Awakening*, pp. 200-1.

<sup>65</sup> *Evangelical Magazine*, 1860, p. 303.

younger people, although that was also important. This study of a period a century and a half ago in which local churches and denominations grew and developed inevitably raises questions about how congregational life becomes energised in new ways in contemporary Europe.

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## ‘You shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade’: Liberation Theology’s Critique of Late Modern Capitalism

Tim Noble

The account of the cleansing of the temple is one of the few incidents related in all four gospels.<sup>1</sup> But as with the other common incidents, there are some important differences in the Johannine version. In the Synoptics there is a reference to Jeremiah 7:11: ‘Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers?’ John, however, has Jesus say to the pigeon sellers: ‘Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade’. (John 2:16)

I am not intending to offer an exegesis of this passage, but rather to use it as an image or metaphor for discussing the way in which liberation theology has responded to late modern capitalism,<sup>2</sup> as practised and experienced over the past forty years. The passage from John concerning the cleansing of the temple is not, as far as I know, one that is much used by liberation theologians.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the relationship and difference between ‘economy’, the realm or Kingdom of the structuring of the *oikos emporiou*, the house of trade, and what one might call, echoing Galatians,<sup>4</sup> Christonomy, the realm or Kingdom<sup>5</sup> of *oikos tou Patros mou*, the house of the Father, has been a key concern for liberation theologians since the early days.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 21:12-13; Mk 11:15-17; Lk 19:45-46; Jn 2:13-17.

<sup>2</sup> There are various terms which could be used to describe the phenomenon of capitalism over the last fifty years or so. I use late modern capitalism as a fairly generic term, of which schools such as neo-liberalism would be a part. It might be argued that liberation theology has always suffered somewhat by being unclear as to exactly what it is that is being criticised. However, in general, it is those forms and expressions of late modern capitalism which stress the centrality of the economic as the defining characteristic of human existence.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in what might be termed the *Summa* of the first twenty years of liberation theology, the two volume work edited by Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría, *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1992), the scriptural index contains two references to these verses, both of which are more or less accidental to the argument.

<sup>4</sup> The Law of Christ, Galatians 6:2.

<sup>5</sup> The choice of Kingdom is not accidental. One of the ways of reading the debate is in terms of the Two Standards, the meditation from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius (SpEx 136-148), a point Jon Sobrino makes in his essay, ‘*Extra Pauperes Nulla Salus: A Short Utopian-Prophetic Essay*’, in Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), pp.34-76, here p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Gustavo Gutiérrez’ discussion of dependency theory in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation*, Revised Edition (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), pp. 51-54. Although Gutiérrez concentrates more on politics as a solution, his reading of the problem is essentially an economic one.



In what follows I want to trace this difference, showing how liberation theology has constantly and consistently resisted the attempts of the economic realm to take over the divine. In the first part, I offer an analysis of the problem, looking at the aim of and reasons for the critique of late modern capitalism, with a particular investigation of the battle over the language and locus of salvation. I will focus primarily, though by no means exclusively, on the work of theologians related to the DEI<sup>7</sup> (*Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones* – Ecumenical Research Institute) in San José, Costa Rica, especially the German-born Franz Hinkelammert<sup>8</sup> and the Brazilian theologian, Jung Mo Sung.<sup>9</sup> In the second part, I look at one particular response to this challenge, focusing on an essay by Jon Sobrino.

## Unveiling the Rules of the House of Trade

### *Liberation Theology's Uncertain Relationship to the Economic*

Valpy Fitzgerald begins his chapter on economics in the theology of liberation in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* with the following claim: 'Economics – in the general sense of the critical study of production, distribution and consumption of wealth in human society – is a central theme of liberation theology'.<sup>10</sup> For Fitzgerald, then, economics, or perhaps more broadly, the economic sphere, is a crucial part of liberation theology's production. On the other hand, Jung Mo Sung has written a book whose title translated into English is *Economy: A Theme Absent from the Theology of Liberation*.<sup>11</sup> Sung writes in the introduction to his book:

There is general agreement that, since its beginnings, liberation theology has sought to be a theological reflection from the viewpoint of and about the practices of liberation of the poor and oppressed... The poor were

<sup>7</sup> DEI was founded in the 1970s, primarily by theologians and others forced to leave Chile following the Pinochet coup. It is notable for its ecumenical dimension and the quality and extent of its research. Due to Hinkelammert, an economist by training, it has always had a much greater and better informed interest in economic questions than was often the case elsewhere with liberation theology.

<sup>8</sup> On Franz Hinkelammert, see José Duque, German Gutiérrez, eds., *Itinerarios de la Razón Crítica: Homenaje a Franz Hinkelammert en sus 70 Años* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Jung Mo Sung was born in Korea. He moved to Brazil at the age of 9 and has lived there ever since. His first studies were in Business Administration, before moving to theology. For his own reflection on his theological trajectory, see Jung Mo Sung, 'La teología y la vida de los pobres' in Juan-José Tamayo and Juan Bosch, eds., *Panorama de la Teología Latinoamericana* (Estella (Navarra): Editorial Verbo Divino, 2002), pp. 371-388.

<sup>10</sup> Valpy Fitzgerald, 'The economics of liberation theology' in Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 218-234, here p. 218. The second edition of this work, published in 2008, contains the same article, pp. 248-264.

<sup>11</sup> This is in fact his doctoral dissertation, published first in Portuguese. I will refer, however, to the Spanish edition: Jung Mo Sung, *Economía: Tema Ausente en la Teología de la Liberación* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1994).

understood as the economically impoverished, in a material sense. Thus the economy, which was taken up as a central theme in liberation theology, should be the object of many theological reflections. However, since 1975 the best-known theologians, most widely used in the base communities, such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, Clodovis Boff, João B. Libânio and others have hardly, if at all, worked on the relation between theology and economy.<sup>12</sup>

Although these two comments are apparently opposed, they are really referring to two different questions. One is to do with the central interest of liberation theology, which has always involved a critique of the economic system which impoverishes people.<sup>13</sup> Sung’s point, on the other hand, refers to the way in which this theme has actually been addressed by liberation theologians, and he notes that they have always tended to avoid confronting it head-on.<sup>14</sup>

Sung claims<sup>15</sup> that the reason for this is to do with problems in liberation theology’s methodology about how social analysis and the theological moment are to be correctly related. It is not clear whether this argument stands up to scrutiny<sup>16</sup> and, in any case, it is not directly relevant to the theme of this article. However, it would certainly be fair to say that most of the best-known liberation theologians have not grappled directly with economic issues, restricting themselves to rather general criticisms of globalisation, understood normally in a solely negative way.

### ***Who Sets the Rules of the House?***

In response to this lack of reflection on economic issues, which may also be due to the absence of any formal economic expertise on the part of the theologians in question, Sung has undertaken a critique of the dominant economic system. In doing this he was initially heavily influenced by Franz Hinkelammert and other members of the DEI. Hinkelammert grew up in Germany during the Nazi period, and trained first as an economist. In the early 1960s he moved to Chile, where he was involved with the Allende government. He had to leave after the coup in 1973, and after a few years back in Germany he went to Central America. Most of the liberation theologians have come to an interest in economics or at least the economy

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<sup>12</sup> Sung, *Economía*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> On the fact that the poor are impoverished, made poor, not born poor, see for example, Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (London: SCM, 1983), p.137, and Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), pp. 239-244.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Fitzgerald goes on to say something very similar.

<sup>15</sup> Sung, *Economía*, p.13.

<sup>16</sup> See Tim Noble, *The Poor in Liberation Theology: Pathway to God or Ideological Construct?*, (Sheffield: Equinox – Acumen, 2013), pp. 58-59.

through pastoral engagement and theological reflection, but for Hinkelammert it was the other way around.<sup>17</sup> His interest in theology developed in part because of his observation of the situation in Latin America, and partly because he realised that economics and theology were in a sense rivals. To return to the quotation from John, one might put it like this: ‘Which house could claim its rules as determinative for the other?’

In an interview with one of his fellow-workers in the DEI, German Gutiérrez, Hinkelammert was asked about the different phases through which liberation theology had passed. Looking back over some thirty years,<sup>18</sup> Hinkelammert divided liberation theology’s journey into three parts, roughly according to decades (1960s and 1970s, 1980s and finally 1990s). In this final phase, he notes, ‘the polarity is law of the market – human survival’.<sup>19</sup> This latter for him is more fundamental even than the option for the poor, which ‘is the result of the option for human survival’.<sup>20</sup> For Hinkelammert, then, the law of the market (the internal rules of the house of trade, we might say) poses a direct threat to human survival, which puts it, therefore, against the law of Christ, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.<sup>21</sup> The real question here is what can bring life, what can sustain humanity and bring it to fulfilment in Christ. The market repeatedly promises salvation, but it cannot deliver it.

In this sense, Hinkelammert has spoken about ‘the irrationality of the rationalised’.<sup>22</sup> In summary form, in terms of a critique of neoliberal market economies, it can be argued that ‘the rationalisation by competitiveness and efficiency (profitability) reveals the profound irrationality of the rationalised. Efficiency is not efficient. Upon reducing rationality to rentability [*sic* – presumably “profitability”] the present economic system

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<sup>17</sup> On this see the interview with German Gutiérrez in *Itinerarios de la Razón Crítica*, pp. 17-42 (this interview is also contained in Tamayo and Bosch, eds., *Panorama de la Teología Latinoamericana*, pp. 257-286). Hinkelammert says in this interview (p. 32): ‘Liberation theology normally starts from theology, not from economics. As a result, the relevance of economics is discovered from the standpoint of theology. I made the opposite journey. From the standpoint of economics, I discovered the relevance of theology.’

<sup>18</sup> The interview took place in 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with German Gutiérrez in *Itinerarios de la Razón Crítica*, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 8:2.

<sup>22</sup> A very brief version of this critique is to be found in Franz Hinkelammert, ‘Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America: Economy and Theology, or the Irrationality of the Rationalized’ in David Batstone et al, eds., *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas* (London / New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 25-52, esp. pp. 44-48. The article is poorly translated, but more or less comprehensible. The Spanish version can be found in José Duque, ed., *Por una sociedad donde quepan todos* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1996), pp. 53-85. Hinkelammert’s major work in this area is *Crítica a la Razón Utopica* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1984). For his reflections on this work, see Franz Hinkelammert, ‘Utopismos y utopías de la modernidad: Acerca de la Crítica a la razón utópica. Entrevista de Norbert Arntz’ in Duque, ed., *Itinerarios de la razón crítica*, pp. 61-78.

transforms itself into irrationality’.<sup>23</sup> The point that is being made here is closely linked to Hinkelammert’s denunciation of what he calls ‘utopic reason’.<sup>24</sup> The basic premise of the law of the market, according to him, is that perfection, in the form of a totally free and unregulated market is both possible and desirable. In a world where there is no interference, all will be well and the market will bring happiness, if not to all, then at least to the vast majority. But in fact the logic of the market is self-destructive.<sup>25</sup> Consider the classic double-entry book-keeping, where everything is entered as profit and loss. Perfect profitability can only be gained with perfect loss. This is precisely why Hinkelammert sees the market as a threat to human survival, and why it is ultimately irrational. The only way to produce a perfect market is to make sure there are no people, but if there are no people, then the marketplace is entirely empty and has destroyed itself.

It is not the market as such that Hinkelammert objects to.<sup>26</sup> Markets (both the international and the very local) are places where exchange happens, and this is clearly necessary, and, indeed, at least at a local level, good, since it is one of the places where social relationships are formed and maintained. This is not unreasonable, or irrational. The problem is when attempts are made to absolutise the law of the market. To illustrate this, we can go back to the cleansing of the temple. It is not that the pigeon sellers or the money changers were not needed. For the worship of the Temple to continue in a proper way, they were indeed very much needed. But what Jesus condemns is the way in which they had usurped the sacred space for their own ends, so that the Temple had now come to serve them, rather than their being present to serve the Temple and its worshippers. Absolutised even further, this would mean that people would only go to change money and buy pigeons, but then the Temple would close, and no one would go there any more, and the pigeon sellers and money changers would have no one to make use of their services.

### ***Taking over the Language***

One of the key indicators of the way in which the market has sought to absolutise its laws is seen in the sort of language which is used by economics, which further reveals its intent to rival Christianity or other

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<sup>23</sup> Hinkelammert, ‘Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America’, p. 45. I am presuming that ‘rentability’ translates the Spanish *rentabilidad* which means ‘profitability’ in English.

<sup>24</sup> Apart from the works cited above in footnote 22, see also Jorge Vergara, ‘La contribución de Hinkelammert a la crítica latinoamericana al neoliberalismo’, in Duque, ed., *Itinerarios de la razón crítica*, pp. 329-349.

<sup>25</sup> Hinkelammert, ‘Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America’ pp. 45-46.

<sup>26</sup> This is a point made by Jung Mo Sung, ‘Teología e la vida de los pobres’, p. 383.

religious languages. Jung Mo Sung, in introducing his account of his own theological work, starts by saying that the sort of theology which he has been doing does not try to critique the economy using what are essentially non-theological criteria. Rather, he goes on to say that this theological stream ‘tries to show that there are certain fundamental theological presuppositions at the very heart of economic theory itself. After revealing the theological presuppositions and logic at the centre of economics, it offers a theological critique of them’.<sup>27</sup>

One of the ways it goes about doing this is through attending carefully to the kind of language which is used. He notes that ‘it is quite common to hear from their [i.e., economists, politicians, commentators] mouths words such as “faith” (in the market), “sacrifices” (demanded by the market), or that “there is no salvation” (or path) outside the market’.<sup>28</sup> It would be possible, of course, to dismiss this as simply some minor linguistic coincidence, or at most the lingering traces of Christian vocabulary in the languages of Western Europe. However, it is the contention of people like Sung and Hinkelammert that there is more to it than this. The use of language reveals the thought patterns underlying economics, and its pretension to offer an alternative explanation or sense of meaning to life. In this way it places itself in conflict with religious language.

The most common way to speak about this is in terms of idolatry, and it is one of the key contributions of liberation theology to have reintroduced this concept into theology. For, essentially, the economy is offering a vision (a utopian vision, as Hinkelammert reminds us) of how the world could be, one in which there is fullness of life for all. In that sense, it sets itself up as a god and demands worship and complete submission. But the denial of divinity to anyone other than the one God, Yahweh, is one of the defining themes of the Old Testament. For liberation theology, God is the God of life who rejects all that seeks to bring death.<sup>29</sup> There are a number of ways of understanding idolatry<sup>30</sup> but here I want to look at it in terms of the attitude to the law, to the *nomos* which governs the house of trade, and which sets itself up in opposition to the *nomos* which

<sup>27</sup> Jung Mo Sung, ‘La teología y la vida de los pobres’ in Tamayo and Bosch, eds., *Panorama de la Teología Latinoamericana*, p. 371.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 371.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the classic text on this from liberation theology is Pablo Richard et al, *The Idols of Death and the God of Life: A Theology*, (trans. Barbara Campbell and Bonnie Shepard) (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983) (orig. *La Lucha de los dioses: Los ídolos de la opresión y la búsqueda del Dios Liberador*, San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1980). The English title makes clear the fundamental conflict that is at stake here. The original Spanish title means ‘The Struggle of the Gods: The Idols of Oppression and the Search for the Liberator (or Liberating) God’.

<sup>30</sup> See Noble, *The Poor in Liberation Theology*, pp. 41-52, for more on this.

governs the house of the Father. In a text first written in 2001, Sung begins by drawing attention to the way in which capitalism has presented itself as a system to which there is no alternative.<sup>31</sup> The economy is seen as evolving and self-organising. Somewhere at the back of this lies also the idea first proposed by Adam Smith that there is ‘an invisible hand’ guiding the market.<sup>32</sup> Whatever Smith himself meant by this phrase,<sup>33</sup> it has come to serve as a leading metaphor for describing the operation of the market. Much of this is linked to both evolutionary theory and the ideas of self-regulation of the market. In essence, what is being argued is that the market functions in the way it does because it is natural, and it has been formed – has evolved – to furnish the best possible manner for the carrying out of business.<sup>34</sup> What is important here is the close similarity to arguments from design. These argue that from the way things are, the existence of God can be deduced. The economists’ argument is that the nature of the market as we experience it helps us to deduce the fundamental reality about the market.

In terms of self-regulation, Sung turns to a discussion of the Austrian-born British economist, Friedrich Hayek. The necessity of the market for Hayek stemmed from what at first sight may seem an anti-utopian vision. He argued that there is simply too much data for any one individual to be able to possess and process it all, so that knowledge is always, for the individual, incomplete. The economy is always ultimately unknowable, at least as far as any one individual is concerned, and indeed, in as far as any group of individuals is concerned. The market is simply too complex to be grasped at this level.

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<sup>31</sup> Jung Mo Sung, ‘Nova Forma de Legitimação da Economia: Desafios para Ética e Teologia’, available online at [www.servicioskoinonia.org/relat/273p.htm](http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/relat/273p.htm) (accessed 23 September 2010). The title translates as ‘A New Form of Legitimation of the Economy: Challenges for Ethics and Theology’. Often cited under the acronym TINA, the phrase ‘There Is No Alternative’ was especially associated in Britain with Margaret Thatcher as part of her espousal of neo-liberal economic policies. It is probably, needless to say, that this claim was and still is heavily contested.

<sup>32</sup> See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of the Nations* (London: J.M.Dent, 1910, Vol.1), p. 400. See also on this David Jenkins, *Market Whys and Human Wherefores. Thinking Again About Markets, Politics and People* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 43-65. For a debate on the significance of the metaphor, see Gavin Kennedy, ‘Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand: From Metaphor to Myth’, in *Econ Journal Watch* 6:2 (2009), pp. 239-263, [www.aier.org/aier/publications/ejw\\_wat\\_may09\\_kennedy.pdf](http://www.aier.org/aier/publications/ejw_wat_may09_kennedy.pdf), and the response by Daniel Klein, in ‘Adam Smith’s Invisible Hands: Comment on Gavin Kennedy’, *Econ Journal Watch* 6:2 (2009), pp. 264-279, <http://econjwatch.org/articles/in-adam-smith-s-invisible-hands-comment-on-gavin-kennedy>, and finally Kennedy’s reply ‘A Reply to Daniel Klein on Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand’, *Econ Journal Watch* 6:3 (2009), pp. 374-388, <http://econjwatch.org/articles/a-reply-to-daniel-klein-on-adam-smith-and-the-invisible-hand> (accessed 17 October 2013).

<sup>33</sup> I refer here to the debate between Kennedy, who argues that for Smith himself it is not an important metaphor, and Klein, who argues that it was significant for Smith. Both agree, however, that over the past half century or so it has played a leading role for many economists.

<sup>34</sup> Sung, ‘Nova Forma’, cites various authors in this respect in the first section (1. ‘Mão invisível’ do Mercado e a auto-organização) of his article.

As Sung notes,<sup>35</sup> Hayek cannot have any direct proof of his assertion regarding the status of knowledge, since to do so would imply a denial of the thesis itself. So, he argues through an attempt to demonstrate that all interventions in the economy by governments or social institutions have had negative results. Given that this is so, it is better to leave the market alone, because it knows best. That this is rather a circular form of argument is shown by Sung:

We have no way of proving that the market is the only efficient way of coordinating knowledge and the social division of labour, because this would require a knowledge which is *per se* impossible, but we know that this thesis is true because all other models of economic coordination which presuppose an intervention in the market experience more economic failings.<sup>36</sup>

But, of course, as Sung goes on to point out, if we cannot know the market, then we cannot know that not intervening would not have even worse results. The various responses to the recent world financial crisis have clearly shown the conflicting tendencies. The Hayekian tendency has been to let whatever happened happen, because the market would produce the best possible solution. The fact that people would lose their homes, their jobs, their lives, is not, after all, in an evolutionary sense important, since what matters is the propagation of the species, not of the individual. The market needs to survive, not the individual participant in it. The opposing tendency has also accepted that we cannot know everything about the market. However, this has not been seen as an invitation to *laissez-faire* policies. Rather, it opens up the possibility of intervening in the areas where governments do have some knowledge and some chance of action.

An important related question here is the relationship between economics and ethics.<sup>37</sup> Sung points out that initially there was a strong relationship between ethics and economics.<sup>38</sup> It was only much later that this relationship came into question. It is not, says Sung, that the two are seen as in some sense mutually exclusive, but that ‘morality and values external to the economic and business enterprise cannot dictate norms or restrict economic actions’.<sup>39</sup> In other words, ethics and the economy are autonomous spheres. However, recently this has begun to change again, as the proliferation of courses in business ethics shows. Nevertheless, the

<sup>35</sup> Sung, ‘Nova Forma’, section III, Hayek e a fé na evolução.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Ética y sistema económico complejo’, Jung Mo Sung, [www.servicioskoinonia.org/relat/304.htm](http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/relat/304.htm) (accessed 17 October 2013).

<sup>38</sup> As he reminds us, Adam Smith was professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, and considered economics as a branch of ethics. Sung, ‘Ética y sistema económico complejo’, section 2, Ética y economía / empresas

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

problem that remains is related to the self-regulatory nature of the market. Most business ethics concentrates on the economic agent – the business person, for example – who is also seen, either individually or corporately, as a moral agent. But Sung wants to argue that the system itself, in as far as it is regarded as self-regulatory, also needs to be subject to ethical questioning.<sup>40</sup>

In this respect, Sung suggests that

To reduce, then, ethics to the moral behaviour of individuals or businesses is to reduce ethics and socio-economic analysis to the sphere of acting according to a set of established rules. It is necessary to break this reduction and make the object of analysis the economic system itself, with its institutions and rules.<sup>41</sup>

That is to say, as long as the discussion happens within the boundaries set by the economic system itself, any possible critique will always be pre-determined by the rules of the system. The need, though, is to investigate these very rules, for it is they which influence the moral activity of individual or collective agents. In order to question the system, Sung has recourse to the language, developed by liberation theology, of structural sin. It still remains open as to how precisely to employ this language, and especially to try to determine where moral responsibility might lie.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, to see the self-regulating market in terms of a sinful structure does allow us to criticise the system itself. Indeed, for people like Hayek, the self-regulating market is often described in terms of what one might call ‘structural virtue’, as something which in itself is good. To try to ameliorate its worst effects, or to change or control it, is seen in Hayek’s terms as wrong.<sup>43</sup>

It is ultimately for this reason that liberation theology has used the language of idolatry to talk about the economy, or at least about what it considers the most pernicious neo-liberal forms of late modern capitalism. It is important to understand this, since the temptation has often been to reduce liberation theology’s position rather simplistically to a Marxist one. Even in the first days of liberation theology, when the appeal to Marxist terminology was perhaps less nuanced and sophisticated than it was to become, liberation theology was never simply Marxist. This is not to say that it did not in the concrete situations of many Latin American countries,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, section 3, ‘Ética y sistema económico autorregulador’.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, section 4, Pecado estructural.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



favour an approach which might be termed socialist.<sup>44</sup> However, liberation theologians have in general understood themselves as using Marx in an instrumental fashion,<sup>45</sup> so that the poor question Marx rather than the other way around.<sup>46</sup>

The language of idolatry is ultimately, as with much else in Christian theological discourse, bound up with soteriological interests. To put it another way, which house's *nomos* can save, which logic is the logic of the Logos and which of the world which rejected the Logos? There can be little doubt that contemporary capitalism offers us a path to fulfilment.<sup>47</sup> It claims that, to the extent to which we are faithful to its dictates, we will gain what we desire. Anything that seems to be a counter-example is simply dismissed as proof of lack of sufficient fervour and faith in the system. Responses to the economic crisis that began to hit home in 2008 clearly demonstrate this. Defenders of the neo-liberal approach needed some time to re-group, but by now they have been able to put together arguments to show that if governments had not been affected by a lack of belief in the market, all would have been well.<sup>48</sup>

It may be even uncomfortable for theologians and church members to recognise how much this style of argumentation can be found in their own circles. One is reminded of Antony Flew's argument about the invisible gardener,<sup>49</sup> which is designed precisely to ask questions about the possibility of falsification in religious discourse. Now my task here is not at all to enter into questions pertinent to the philosophy of religion. Nevertheless, the point is that one of the ways in which to note the appearance of an idol is that it is something which is taken absolutely for

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<sup>44</sup> See for example Ian Maclean, *Opting for Democracy? Liberation Theology and the Struggle for Democracy in Brazil* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the most cited work in this connection is Clodovis Boff, 'O Uso do "Marxismo" em Teologia', *Comunicações do ISER* 3/8 (1984), pp. 11-18. See also Clodovis Boff, 'Crise do Socialismo e a Igreja da Libertação', *Voices* 84/3 (1990), pp. 368-380.

<sup>46</sup> Clodovis Boff, 'Epistemología y Método de la Teología de la Liberación', in Sobrino and Ellacuría, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis*, Vol. 1, pp.79-113, here p.104.

<sup>47</sup> See Raghuram G. Rajan, Luigi Zingales, *Saving Capitalism from the Capitalists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). At the beginning of their book (p.1), they claim that '[c]apitalism, or more precisely, the free market system, is the most effective way to organise production and distribution that human beings have found'.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, a blog, 'The Fault Line' by Raghuram Rajan, Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, <http://blogs.chicagobooth.edu/n/blogs/blog.aspx?nav=main&webtag=faultlines&entry=24> (accessed 17 October 2013), arguing that the main responsibility for the credit crisis was government interference and people who took out subprime mortgages. A similar view is expressed by some of those interviewed in an article by Andrew Clark, the outgoing US Economics editor of *The Guardian* newspaper, available at [www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/oct/07/farewell-to-wall-street-us-financial-crisis](http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/oct/07/farewell-to-wall-street-us-financial-crisis) (accessed 17 October 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Antony Flew, 'Theology and Falsification', first published in 1950, and first printed in Antony Flew, Alasdair MacIntyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM, 1955). Flew drew on an earlier article by John Wisdom for this parable.

granted, and against which no arguments can be used, since the starting point has to be one of faith. Perhaps we may want to say that it is the effects of the faith which have to be measured, although even there it is by no means straightforward.

Liberation theology has sought to unveil the logic of idolatry<sup>50</sup> because it claims that, in presenting itself as a possible language about salvation, late modern capitalism is trying to take control of the Father’s house, in the sense that it presents the market as an alternative place of worship, with all the concomitant structures and language of belief. This can be seen as doubly destructive for the poor, who are called on to place their trust in something which cannot help them, and which, moreover, is actually the cause of their suffering in the first place. This is because capitalism depends on sacrifices, on some being losers in order that others may be winners.<sup>51</sup> Whether this is inevitable for all forms of capitalism is open, perhaps, to question and, in theory at least, each loser in one part of the complex game of the market could be a winner elsewhere. However, the data does not obviously support this.<sup>52</sup>

To sum up, then, on this first part on liberation theology’s critique of the market, the following can be said. Since its earliest days, liberation theology has placed a heavy emphasis on criticising dominant forms of economic totality, mainly expressions of late modern capitalism, since these have been the most pressing in Latin America, though it should be noted that it occasionally recognised that the same problem was true in socialist systems, for example in Communist countries.<sup>53</sup> Although often couched in terms which have been borrowed from the language of Marxism,<sup>54</sup> the reasons for this criticism have always been, at heart, deeply theological, in the sense of saying something about God. And primarily they have wanted to say that God is a God of life, who rejects everything

<sup>50</sup> See for example, Franz Hinkelammert, ‘The Economic Roots of Idolatry: Entrepreneurial Metaphysics’, in Richard et al., *The Idols of Death*, pp. 165-193.

<sup>51</sup> See Rajan and Zingales, *Saving Capitalism from the Capitalists*, p.19, and Michel Beaudin and Jean-Marc Gauthier, ‘The Uncontrolled Return of Passions in the Economical and Political Sacrificial “Soteriology” of Our Times: Theological Perspectives’, in Wolfgang Palaver, Petra Steinmair-Pösel, eds., *Passions in Economy, Politics and the Media: In Discussion with Christian Theology* (Vienna: LIT, 2005), pp. 175-195.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Andrew Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) (Second Edition, Revised and Updated), pp. 289-294.

<sup>53</sup> For an interesting commentary on visits to different Marxist countries, see Clodovis Boff, *Cartas Teológicas sobre o Socialismo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1989). For the admittedly less common critiques of Marxism or so-called ‘Real Socialism’ by liberation theologians, see also Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘Utopía y profetismo’, in Ellacuría, Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis* vol.1, pp.393-442, here p. 431, and Jung Mo Sung, *Economia: Tema Ausente*, p. 207.

<sup>54</sup> Clodovis Boff, *Teologia e Prática: Teologia do Político e suas Mediações* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1982), pp. 122-124, maintains that ultimately this is an ethical choice, given the alternative.

that brings death. It is not hard to see how closely this chimes in with Paul's constant rejection of dependence on the law,<sup>55</sup> not because the law is in itself bad, but because it ends up replacing the God to whom it is meant to lead. In this sense it would not be impossible for liberation theology to accept that capitalism could have some worth, if it were prepared to recognise its limitations. But, inasmuch as it sets itself up as a rival to God, like the Law for Paul, it can ultimately only lead to death, since it necessarily excludes the salvific inbreaking of God in Christ.

## Liberation Theology's Response

Liberation theologians, it must be admitted, have generally been stronger on critique than on suggesting alternatives. This is partly because liberation theology has tended to see its role as prophetic,<sup>56</sup> which it has taken to mean denouncing what it regards as contrary to the will of God and the holding out of a liberative vision, which tends to the utopian.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, liberation theologians, as already noted, are mostly steeped in the theological tradition, and not in economics. However, precisely because capitalism in its late modern form has been idolised, and thus, at least in a perverted way, theologised, liberation theology has been able to respond theologically to the threats which it perceives. I now want to look briefly at one such attempt.

At the heart of the liberation theology enterprise has been a commitment to the poor as the privileged locus for the revelation of and encounter with God. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the leading theologians of liberation, Jon Sobrino, has turned to the poor in his critique of capitalism. Sobrino has suggested in one of his essays that '*extra pauperes nulla salus*'.<sup>58</sup> He begins the essay with some comments on what he terms 'the contemporary civilization of capital'.<sup>59</sup> This civilisation, he continues, 'generates extreme scarcities, dehumanizes persons, and

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<sup>55</sup> Hinkelammert, 'Liberation Theology in the Economic and Social Context of Latin America', pp. 46-47. See also on Pauline understandings of idolatry, Brian Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor* (Grand Rapids: Wm.Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> See Clodovis Boff, 'Retorno à arché da teologia', in Luis Carlos Susin, ed., *Sarça Ardente: Teologia na América Latina – Perspectivas* (São Paulo: SOTER/Paulinas, 2000), pp. 145-187, here p.182.

<sup>57</sup> See on this, for example, two articles by the Venezuelan theologian, Pedro Trigo, 'Ha muerto la teología de la liberación? La realidad actual y sus causas (I),' *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* 22 (2005), pp.45-74, and 'Ha muerto la teología de la liberación? La realidad actual y sus causas (II),' *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* 22 (2005), pp. 287-313.

<sup>58</sup> Sobrino, '*Extra pauperes nulla salus*. A Short Utopian-Prophetic Essay' (see above, note 5, for details).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35, p. 37.

destroys the human family: it produces impoverished and excluded people and divides the world into conquerors and conquered’.<sup>60</sup>

It is in response to this sickness, this dehumanisation, that he proposes the formulation ‘*extra pauperes nulla salus*’. In the poor, he claims, we find ‘a locus and a potential for salvation’.<sup>61</sup> He reminds us that this is a negative definition, claiming not that ‘with the poor there is automatic salvation... only that without them there is not salvation’.<sup>62</sup> What he is seeking here is a way to offer what he calls in the sub-heading to this section, ‘a new logic to understand salvation’.<sup>63</sup> To the extent that the civilisation of capital has produced a society and a world which are gravely ill – literally as well as metaphorically – something is needed to bring healing to this world, and minimally, this healing of the wounds of the world has to include and come through the poor, through those whom Sobrino, following his fellow-Jesuit, Ignacio Ellacuría, often calls ‘the crucified people’.<sup>64</sup>

Sobrino begins by acknowledging both the novelty and the difficulty of what he is proposing, and suggesting that ultimately it can only be grasped as mystery.<sup>65</sup> The new logic which he calls for requires that we respond to Kant’s questions, asking not only what I can do, but also what I can know and what I can hope for. He adds two further questions: what can I celebrate? and what can I receive?<sup>66</sup> These two questions are, in a sense, the most important, because they are precisely what allow us to find, through the poor, the living God, without reducing the poor to means for my end, and without ignoring the reality of their suffering, and of their daily lives, since, Sobrino reminds us, ‘even the world of the poor is invaded with the *mysterium iniquitatis*’.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, it is often the case that in the world of the poor ‘there are important values; further, they build a civilisation of solidarity’.<sup>68</sup> There is a Brazilian Portuguese word, *mutirão*, which has no precise translation in English, but which expresses this idea very well. It refers to actions where people gather together to perform a task which is of mutual or general

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 37. He then goes on to outline briefly some of the ways in which this civilisation of capital or wealth dehumanises.

<sup>61</sup> Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p.49. See also pp. 57-58.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1994), pp. 254-271, and Ignacio Ellacuría, ‘El Pueblo Crucificado’, in Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis*, 1992, Vol.II, pp. 189-216.

<sup>65</sup> Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

benefit – for example, building a house, working in a field, repairing or building a church, etc. It is at the heart of this civilisation of solidarity of which Sobrino speaks, and it is a feature of the life of the poor, certainly in Brazil.<sup>69</sup> ‘Such an experience’, argues Sobrino, ‘is salvific, for it generates hope for a more human world’.<sup>70</sup> It is this reaction to the dehumanisation of the lust for wealth which allows Sobrino to claim that there can be no salvation which does not pass through an encounter with a world that humanises. He does not quote Irenaeus here, but what springs to mind is the latter’s assertion that ‘the glory of God is the human alive, human life is the vision of God’.<sup>71</sup> In other words, the fullness of humanity which gives glory to and pleases God is the life which is not focused on self and on accumulation of wealth, but which is focused on God, which concretely and necessarily includes full attention to God’s creation around us.

Sobrino goes on to ask ‘not only whether Jesus was salvation for others, but also whether there are indications that others, certainly the heavenly Father and the poor of the earth, were salvation and good news for him’.<sup>72</sup> Although Sobrino clearly feels that this is the case, and that there are stories in the gospel which allow us to see Jesus being converted by contact with the poor,<sup>73</sup> he does not entirely answer the question. Essentially the problem here is that he wants both to leave intact the idea of Jesus as Saviour, but at the same time to argue that the salvific action of Jesus does not happen apart from or untouched by the poor who Jesus loved, among whom Jesus lived, and from whom Jesus learnt and received love.

This is linked to the question as to what sort of salvation comes from the poor. The Spanish theologian José Maria Castillo has offered a detailed account of the nature of salvation in the New Testament in relation to the poor,<sup>74</sup> in which he points out that when the New Testament speaks about salvation it is fundamentally a present tense or historical comment, and that only once does the New Testament refer to ‘eternal salvation’.<sup>75</sup> In other

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<sup>69</sup> I speak of Brazil, since that is the situation I know most closely. However, this would seem to be similar in many other countries of Latin America, and no doubt elsewhere too.

<sup>70</sup> Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p. 52.

<sup>71</sup> *Adv haer* IV.20 *gloria Dei, vivens homo. Vita autem hominis, visio Dei*. Later on, Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p.70, cites Archbishop Romero, who rephrased this as *Gloria Dei vivens pauper*. See also the comment in Sobrino’s footnote 94, giving the reference for this phrase and Romero’s further insistence on the validity of the second part of the quotation.

<sup>72</sup> Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p. 54.

<sup>73</sup> See Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p. 55.

<sup>74</sup> José Maria Castillo, *Los Pobres y La Teología. ¿Qué queda de la Teología de la Liberación?* (Bilbao, Descleé de Brouwer, 1998), see especially pp. 260-271.

<sup>75</sup> See Castillo, *Los pobres y la teología*, p. 260. The text where this phrase occurs is Hebrews 5:9. In addition Castillo notes 2Tim 4:18, Heb 9:28 and 1Pet 1:5 as texts where roughly synonymous ideas are expressed, but argues that these are the only four where salvation refers exclusively to the other life.

words, salvation is not something that happens exclusively after death, but something that is already happening or has already happened. In other words, it is a historical reality.<sup>76</sup> In a similar vein, Sobrino suggests three ways ‘to characterise the salvation that comes from the world of the poor... as an opportunity for overcoming dehumanization, as positive elements for humanizing and attaining goods, and as an invitation to universal solidarity’.<sup>77</sup> For Sobrino, in a very fundamental sense, the encounter with the poor is what can bring about the conversion of the non-poor, and in that sense it corresponds to the “*extra*” *pauperes*. It is only through this encounter that there is hope for the non-poor; elsewhere there are no roads to salvation.

The positive contribution of the poor, which it seems to me is also linked to the question of solidarity, is perhaps harder to name, at least without running the danger of idolising the poor. Sobrino puts it thus: ‘the poor have values and produce positive realities and new social forms that, even if not given massive expression, do offer orientations and elements for a new society’.<sup>78</sup> There is of course a grave danger in this, which Sobrino is all too aware of, that the poor are not only a locus of salvation, but somehow have the responsibility for saving the rich, alongside all their other struggles. But what Sobrino is striving for is a way of acknowledging the very depth of the humanity of the poor. Those whom the civilisation of capital reduces so often, in Gustavo Gutierrez’ phrase, to ‘non-persons’<sup>79</sup> are rather encountered as, to return to Irenaeus, *vivens homo*, humanity at its most vital, perhaps precisely because separated from non-life by such a thin divide. Moreover, when he considers the nature of solidarity, Sobrino is keen to stress that ‘what the non-poor receive may be, as a humanizing reality, superior to what they give’.<sup>80</sup> He characterises this solidarity as ‘unequals bearing one another mutually’,<sup>81</sup> in order to escape the false equalising of globalization.<sup>82</sup>

Sobrino returns towards the end of his essay to the phrase *extra pauperes nulla salus*. What is at stake for him is precisely the locus of

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, p. 86, where he affirms ‘the idea that salvation is an intrahistorical reality’.

<sup>77</sup> Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>79</sup> See Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (trans. Robert Barr) (London, SCM, 1983), p. 57. ‘In Latin America the challenge does not come first and foremost from the non-believer.... It comes from the non-person. It comes from the person whom the prevailing social order refuses to recognise as a person.’ See also pp. 92-93. If it needs saying, Gutiérrez, as the final part of the quotation makes clear, is not in agreement with this attempted depersonification of the poor, but rather radically criticising it, in part by naming it for what it is.

<sup>80</sup> Sobrino, ‘*Extra pauperes*’, p. 64.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

salvation, since that is the ground which is being fought over. To use an image from the gospel of Luke (Lk 16:19-31), is it in the house, at the table, of the rich man or the ground at his gate where Lazarus sits and begs? For Sobrino, it is necessary always to return to the poor, because in them, 'there will always be something of the spirit... there will always be something of Christ'.<sup>83</sup>

This latter comment is something which Sobrino is aware that he cannot prove, nor even adequately defend.<sup>84</sup> It is ultimately an affirmation of faith, of a faith, it is true, born out of experience, and a faith that is not irrational. It is necessary to reiterate that he is not claiming that the poor are in themselves salvific, just as *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* does not mean that the church in and of itself, independent of its head, Christ, can save anybody. He wants to say, rather, that outside of, apart from the poor, it is not possible to know or understand or encounter Christ fully. Neither is this to say that the way to salvation is to go and meet a poor person. Rather, he is saying that without allowing oneself to be deeply touched by the world of the poor, in whatever way the poor choose, we cannot know Christ who made himself one with this world, despite being the Son of God (Philippians 2:5-11). It is in many ways similar to saying that there is no salvation apart from the cross, since the cross includes the suffering of the poor, just as God's response to the cross is at one with the ultimate refusal of the poor to succumb to the suffering.

## Conclusion

In this fairly short, but intensively suggestive essay, Sobrino responds directly to the challenges laid down by the attempts to turn the house of the Father, and its rules, its way of doing things, into a house of trade, with its own conflicting rules and way of doing things which must, in the end, be in contradiction to the will of the Father. He reiterates much of what we have seen about the attempts of capitalism to lay claim to worship and to sacrifice. This, liberation theology will consistently argue, is something that can never bring healing, but only division and destruction to the world. Against this, Sobrino places his shocking claim that it is the poor themselves who are the locus of salvation. Only in and through the poor do we come to encounter what it really means to be saved, what it really means to understand Jesus as our redeemer and saviour. Just as Paul turned the arguments of his critics against them, by preaching the Crucified Christ,

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 71, the English translation uses a lower case 's' for 'spirit', but one assumes this may be more normally written with upper case 'Spirit'.

<sup>84</sup> Sobrino, '*Extra pauperes*', p. 72.

so Sobrino proclaims the Crucified People as the starting point for any serious contemporary engagement with the reality of God’s salvific action in history. He does not do this from some naïve view of the poor as in some sense morally better, but from a profound theological conviction that the poor are the place where God reveals ‘the mystery of his will, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth’.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ephesians 1:9-10.



# **A Gospel-shaped God and a Gospel-shaped Church: A Sunday Reflection**

John Weaver

## **Introduction**

Who is the God we believe in? Who is the God we preach? A God of wrath, a judgemental God, who tells us what we shouldn't do, and who seems to set traps of temptation so that when we fail this God can condemn us? No, we say, but then the all-loving, free-giving, everyone wins a prize, God of the universalist doesn't help either.

How do people see God? Is there something attractive about the God we proclaim? What do our friends, neighbours, colleagues at work, our family think about church? Relevance is often at the heart of people's objection to church.

There are three important questions to ask:

- Does our church effectively help us to live in the contemporary world? To engage faith and life/work issues?
- Is our church effective in preparing people for their role in mission, to understand the current context and to experience the power and presence of God through the Spirit?
- Is our church an attractive community to those who don't know Jesus? Do we present Jesus – are we a demonstration of Christ-like love?

We need a reality and integrity in all we do and say. Christianity that is relevant to daily living will be honest, open, and vulnerable. It does not censor the agony of broken relationships, the bewilderment of unanswered questions, the struggle of work, the scandal of death, the impact of evil on ourselves and those around us.

## **Let's start at the beginning**

Who is the God who created the universe and this world? It's all God's handiwork – it need not have been what it is – God made it the way it is. It was God's decision – it exists and we exist because it is God's will that we all should be here.

So what is God's will? This world is a creation of God's grace – it is God's creative and loving genius. We see the faithfulness of the seasons,

the orderliness of creation, the dependability of the way the world works, and the sheer magnitude, beauty and variety of our world.

But, when we've said all that, we haven't got to the heart of the nature of God yet. We are describing *what* God can do, but not *why* God would make such a world, in which we live.

Who is the Gospel-shaped God of creation? What does the Bible tell us? Creative, powerful, and inventive – these are good words to start with, but to this we must add generous, courageous, liberating, risk-taking, visionary, loving, relationship-making and relationship-desiring.

God sets out to make a world in which human beings eventually appear as the culmination of God's creativity. It is with us, with human beings, that God enters into a loving relationship, it is we who have the nature, the image of God, and it is with us that God can work out his vision, purpose, promises, creativity and love.

But this all proved to be a risky business, because to do this God created us with freewill. God acted like a loving parent and gave us the freedom to love and to trust our creator. But in the story of Adam and Eve, and in our own stories in turn, we recognise the human failing of deciding that it would be much easier, and much more fun, with more freedom, if we played God, if we decided how best to live, and paid no attention to God at all – because when we play God we have the power and the control. Adam and Eve were banished from walking with God in the Garden, which was God's judgement on human self-centredness and power-play.

## **But is the God of the Old Testament *really* a law-giving, judgemental God?**

I think that it is a mistake to take such a narrow view. The God of the Old Testament is consistently presented as a generous, creative, redemptive, relationship-making God, who demonstrates enormous patience and love. Human beings, on the other hand, are seen to be mean, destructive, rebellious and relationship-breaking, and in so doing we bring judgement on ourselves. But this never prevents God from being gracious, caring and loving toward us.

If we consider the Ten Commandments, we find a passage which is popular with those who want to express the 'do nots' of religion. Such people either criticise the church for stopping people enjoying themselves or are judgemental of those who fail to keep those commands. But the Ten Commandments aren't like that at all, they lay out the ways of having a

loving relationship with God and with each other. They are precisely as Jesus summed them up:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets stand on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)<sup>1</sup>

All the Law and the prophets: the law gives advice about relationships and living life to the full, life as God intended; and the prophets tell us about God's promises and God's warnings. The warnings tell us of the consequences of following our own bright ideas and desires instead of God's. The people of Israel brought judgement on themselves, mostly through their selection of bad leaders and their desire to have power and control over their lives.

The Prophets remind us of the love, care and provision of our God. Even when the people rebelled against God, God didn't act like an angry and vengeful human being. We read in Hosea about the people's rebellion and God's love (11:1-11):

My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them. 'How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man – the Holy One among you. (Hosea 11:7-9)

God's love will not allow God to reject or give up on us.

## **In the end God comes to the rescue in person**

Enter Jesus, God incarnate, God with us; this is how we understand God – because the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. What is Jesus like? He is born into our world as one who is:

- poor;
- vulnerable;
- a baby human being, who will grow to be a man;
- a refugee;
- hated by the powerful;
- worshipped by the poor and the outsiders – the shepherds and Magi (wise men from the east);

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<sup>1</sup> All Bible references are taken from the New International Version, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979).

- an obedient child growing with great wisdom and understanding.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way that we are, yet did not give in to temptation, and that we can approach God through Christ.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4: 14-16)

Jesus Christ is the agent of creation, he is the revelation of God's glory, he is the perfect revelation – he is truly God and truly human. This God knows me in the humanity of Christ – God knows my life and understands what it means to be me. This is Good News for all of us. The creator of the universe is not some distant uninterested power but, in Jesus, understands what makes me tick, what makes me laugh, what makes me cry, and accepts me for who I am.

Jesus is God who:

- transforms water into wine and can transform our lives;
- gives sight to the blind and reveals the truth about the world and about God;
- gives faith to the paralysed and who invites us to get to our feet and follow him;
- gives hope for the hopeless;
- offers love to the despised;
- first reveals himself as the Messiah to an outcast Samaritan woman;
- touches the untouchable leper;
- does not condemn the woman caught in the act of adultery, but offers a new way of living;
- parties with the cheats, collaborators, outcasts, sinners and drop outs of society;
- offers life in all the fullness and completeness that God has designed;
- dies our death;
- is resurrected leading us to undying life;
- is present with us through his Holy Spirit helping us to be fruitful in his mission.

## So what is the content of our proclamation of a Gospel-shaped God?

We invite people to trust in the God who loves us, who accepts us as we are, forgives our failures, and desires that we might find his life, life in all the contentment and fullness that he intended every human being to know. Richard Rohr urges us to see that faith is distorted when it is wedded to Western progress and ignores the tragic sense of life. Perfection belongs to Platonism. He challenges us with the observation that

God adjusts to the vagaries and the failures of the moment. This ability to adjust to human disorder and failure is named God's providence or compassion. *Every time God forgives us, God is saying that God's rules do not matter as much as the relationship that God wants to create with us.* Just the Biblical notion of absolute forgiveness, once experienced, should be enough to make us trust and seek and love God.<sup>2</sup>

Rohr encourages us to learn and grow through tragedy and failure. Jesus was never upset by sinners, only by those who thought that they were not sinners. 'Salvation is sin turned on its head and used in our favour'.

This is the God whose every aspect is positive:

- whose only rules are to ensure that our relationships are the very best we can have, and that our communities and society are the best they could be;
- whose warnings are to guide us away from self-centred and selfish lives, which only lead us into dissatisfaction and danger;
- who invites us to share God's vision for the world and for human living;
- who invites us to dream with God His dream for the world;
- who invites us to join in God's transformative revolution for the human race;
- who welcomes us into God's party, celebrating the goodness of creation;
- who encourages us to tell our stories and to see those stories as part of The Story;
- who invites us to trust in God's promises;
- who draws us into the future that God is preparing for the whole universe;
- who entices us into the dance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and all creation;

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward. A spirituality for the two halves of life* (London: SPCK, 2012), pp. 56-7.

- who assures us that nothing can separate us from God's love, which is ours in Christ Jesus;
- who assures us that through life and death, and into eternal life, that God will be our accompanying friend;
- who assures us that in that life beyond death there will be no crying or pain;
- who encourages us to know that the separation that death brings will be reversed, when the living shall join with the risen dead at the coming of Christ in glory.

We know and experience all of this when we are in Christ, when we deny self, take up the cross-shaped life of sacrificial love, and follow Jesus.

## **How do we get to know this Gospel-shaped God?**

At the birth of the Church, at Pentecost, the outsiders in the crowd, having heard about Jesus, ask, what should we do? Peter's answer was straight forward enough: believe, repent, be baptised, and receive the Holy Spirit; which translated means:

- take God at His word;
- recognise our mess, our flawed and damaged lives and relationships;
- express real sorrow and regret for past mistakes and failings, and set our minds to putting things right and change our way of living;
- die to self and live for Christ;
- know God's presence with us in all things and at all times.

Then we can become part of the Kingdom that Jesus is declaring and join God's vision for the world God has made. This is the Gospel that is ours to share.

## **Building a Church**

So we can move on to consider our place in God's world and Christ's mission – of being pulled into the dance and joining the dance of the Trinity, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> We are Kingdom people in Christ – God is building his Kingdom in and through us. But what does this mean for the church, for our life together in the fellowships of which we are a part.

Like many, I want to challenge, if not change, a lot of what makes up the way of doing church within Baptist congregations. Sadly, with an

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<sup>3</sup> See Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God. A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000).

emphasis on performance in worship, methods for increasing numbers, courses to convince non-church people of the faith, or simply concern over the comfort of the fabric and plant of the church buildings, the Church appears to have no interest in what happens in the life and work of the congregation away from church activities.

Bishop Stephen Neil stated at a meeting of the World Council of Churches in 1954 that Christians need to go through three conversions: a conversion to Christ, a conversion to his church, and a conversion to the world, for which Christ died. We might describe this as becoming 'Kingdom people' – we in Christ and he in us.

## Kingdom people

What does it mean to pray 'Thy Kingdom come'? Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom has come near. We are following Jesus and joining him in his mission of shaping the world, in the power of the Spirit – as Jesus proclaimed:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:18-19)

We live within the hope that the Gospel will transform society by the activity of the Spirit. The resurrection of Jesus has brought about a new reality, and the church is part of this new reality, the body of Christ, and through us God meets the world as saviour and liberator. So we are called to step out in faith and share Christ's mission in and for the world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God looks for his church to be a demonstration of his love for the world. We must make sure that passers-by do not scorn the God of the church. We need to understand that our calling is to be Kingdom people, who are involved in building the kingdom. The church is not the Kingdom, the Kingdom is found where we are in Christ and Christ is in us. The post-resurrection church lives in the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:20; 3:14-21) and is called into God's redemptive activity (Romans 8:18-25). Christians have resurrection life now (John 11:25-26), which is eternal life (John 6:34ff and John 10:10) or life in Christ (Romans 6:3,11; 8:1) or experience the presence of the Kingdom in their midst (Luke 10:9, 11; 11:20; 17:21). We are called to live as Kingdom people, who regularly pray 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.'

Kingdom living, being real and relevant as Baptist churches in 2014, is likely to be scary and risky, and may therefore be an unwelcome item on our church and union agendas. Mission in the twenty-first century takes place from the edge rather than the centre of society and requires us to constantly think of new ways of ‘doing’ church. For many of us, the culture of the church is separated from the culture of the world we all inhabit. We need to encourage ‘double listening’ – to the Word *and* the world.

We have a situation whereby in many congregations the only important events are those that are going on in church. The result is that people’s frontlines, such as work, leisure and family life, become ‘special interest topics’ rather than being central to the church’s ministry.

We must release people for their frontlines – wherever and whenever they encounter them. Discipleship is living within the purposes of God, so that a job at the local supermarket can be the call of God. This is a culture shift for the church. This will be a church where anyone who changes employment will be commissioned by the church for their new sphere of mission.

This is a whole life Gospel; a whole life church, with whole life disciples at work, at home, through leisure activities, and on the street where I live. We are sent by Christ into whole life mission rather than leisure time mission. Worship is life; mission is being.

## **A mission-shaped church**

A Gospel-shaped church will be a mission-shaped church. In some countries with declining congregations it is difficult for the church to be mission-minded, when in large part it is engaged in survival. A Mission mode will be open, flexible, reflective, experimental, dynamic and energetic, whereas a survival mode tends to be conservative, exclusive, orthodox, static, and careful.

We may feel that we in our congregations are engaged in mission mode, but I suspect that each of us is in the Numbers 13 and 14 situation – the Promised Land lies before us, but the question remains, will we go forward or stay with what is comfortable and known?

For me reality is the key. One of my former students at Regent’s Park College Oxford, in a pastoral reflection session commented that he had one very critical thing to say about the fellowship in which he was on placement. He said the problem is that they are ‘nice’! There is no reality in their conversations or their worship, no admission of failure or suffering, no criticism even of the student pastor or anyone else, they are just ‘nice’.



How real, radical, or relevant is our worship and fellowship? Do our meetings engage with the issues that are facing the congregation members in their lives and work? Or are we just nice? It may prove worthwhile, if we are brave, to ask people who faithfully attend Sunday by Sunday, or at mid-week meetings why they come and what they think. We might get a few surprises! We might begin by trying to answer the question honestly ourselves.

Often church services and meetings are designed for a small group of insiders who like to do things in a particular way that they find comfortable and supportive. If this is the case, we have moved a long way from a commitment to being the kind of community of the Gospel which is seen in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and from its members' concern to live as Christ in and for the world. We need to keep asking: what on earth is the church for? What sort of church should we be building?

Too often the church looks to be life-denying rather than life-affirming. We have emphasised a sacred-secular divide, which our Christian forebears would not have recognised. We believe that some parts of our life are not really important to God – work, school, sport, TV, politics, sex – but anything to do with prayers, church services and church-based activity is. Many people have never heard a sermon on the theology of work; the God-given joy of sexual relationships within marriage; our political responsibility; or how to challenge the many opinions produced by the media. I heard about one young woman who said: 'I teach in Sunday School 45 minutes a week and once a year I am invited to the front and the whole church prays for me. I teach in school 40 hours a week and no one ever prays for me.' This is why so many people, in response to the question: what work do you do for God?, answer with their jobs in the church.

A recent report in the United Kingdom says that young followers of Christ want to hear the church discuss and engage in conversation about homosexuality, social justice issues, women in ministry, poverty, environmental concerns, human rights issues, health-care issues, and the current situations of violence and injustice in the world. They are eager to have open, honest, almost jaw-dropping conversations, which balance the current issues with their faith. Instead of church politics they want the church to engage with the concerns of their lives in the world, and they are looking for the simplicity of the early church.

## What would a Gospel-shaped church look like?

The Cardiff District of Baptist ministers in Wales asked me to talk to them on the theme: if you were starting to form a congregation today, what would it look like? That's a dangerous question to ask someone like me. But let me sketch out the sort of church that I would like to build. It would be:

- a generous church demonstrating the generous love of God: water into wine; feeding the 5000 – more than enough;
- an open-minded church: ready to listen to other people's stories; ready to learn new things about God and about ourselves; ready to see God at work outside of the church. Letting God out of the box – whatever your box or my box is;
- a church with an open heart: accepting people as they are, and not as we think they ought to be; loving people in spite of what they do and say; recognising that every person we meet is someone for whom Christ has died. We might describe the church with the title of a recent book: *No Perfect People Allowed*;<sup>4</sup>
- a congregation with open lives: vulnerable, real, honest, full of integrity; being honest about our doubts and failures. I like the words of Maria Boulding in her book *Gateway of Hope*:  

If we cannot endure failing and being weak, and being seen to fail and be weak, we are not yet in a position to love and be loved.....

Christ has gone down into the deepest places of our failure and claimed them as his own, and now there is no possible failure in our lives or our deaths that cannot be the place of meeting him and of greater openness to his work<sup>5</sup>;
- a church where worship is real and relevant – this has little to do with our preferred music styles, but is worship that helps us to meet with God;
- a church where leadership is Christ-shaped (cross-shaped, self-emptying) rather than shaped by the latest fads and 'success-guaranteed' programmes from another alien culture;
- a church that addresses the issues that are concerning the congregation and the community;
- a church which celebrates every aspect of the lives of the congregation;

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<sup>4</sup> John Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed. Creating a Come as you are Culture in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Maria Boulding, *Gateway to Hope* (London: Collins/Fount, 1985), pp. 12, 74, quoted in Stephen Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SPCK, 1993), p. 168.

- a church which commissions its members in any new job or change of life position – recognising these as aspects of the church's mission;
- a church that recognises that everyone is of value to God and that no one is excluded nor can opt out because they are too old or too young.

## What sort of church are people looking for?

We are constantly told that people like Jesus but not the church that bears his name. We need a reality and integrity in all we do and say. Christianity that is relevant to daily living will be honest, open, vulnerable. It does not censor the agony of broken relationships, the bewilderment of unanswered questions, the struggle of work, the scandal of death, the impact of evil on ourselves and those around us. We understand the importance of this as today we continue to see the threat of terrorism at home and starvation and genocide in other countries. We have seeker-sensitive events but what about addressing the concerns of the leavers or those who are ready to give up? We might suggest the following agenda:

- Provide places for people to explore, question and doubt. A safe place to say 'prayer doesn't work'; 'God has left me'; 'I don't know whether I believe x or y or z';
- Provide a theology of journey – a *Pilgrim's Progress*,<sup>6</sup> which includes Vanity Fayre and the Slough of Despond; where we can speak of dark places and the absence of God – when God hides his face;
- Provide resources for people in the dark places – of nurture and spiritual direction;
- Provide models of other theological understandings – God is bigger than one theological perspective. As Jesus said: 'You have heard it said in your traditions ... but I say ...';
- Provide models of an honest Christian life rather than the treadmill of the 'oughts';
- Provide room for emotions and intuitions.<sup>7</sup>

Our modern church, like much of society, tries to deny or cover over the painful and difficult aspects of daily life. This leads to deception and game-playing. A community which reflects the life of Jesus will be a community of *generosity* and *sharing*, of *friendship* and *belonging*, of

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<sup>6</sup> John Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* in two parts, of which the first appeared in London in 1678, which he had begun during his imprisonment in 1676. The second part appeared in 1684.

<sup>7</sup> See Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith. Faith Journeys beyond the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2002), pp.145-51.

*mission and identity, of freedom and risk-taking.* We will accept and welcome all comers whatever they have done, or say or think, just as Jesus did; allowing them to hear and experience the love of God. As such it cannot but help stand out against the deeply held values of Western culture. We use the metaphors of ‘body’, ‘fellowship’, ‘*koinonia*’, ‘communion’, words that express relationship and community. The call to follow Christ is not a solitary pilgrimage but to follow in community with others, as we read in Acts 2. Not me and my Jesus, but the body and bride of Christ working in the power of the Spirit as part of Christ’s mission in and for the world.

The church is a community of grace (God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense); it is a gift of God in which we are invited to participate.

The late David Watson<sup>8</sup> said that the measure of the church should be that it brings together a bunch of people that no other club or society could ever attract into one fellowship. Of course this will include women and men who are known for their good works and holiness. But it will also include the struggling and the wayward, the fallen and the weak. This is the essence of the church of Christ. The lovely thing about being a Christian is that you don’t have to be right; you have to be forgiven!

## **What church will we build?**

Our spirituality is based in God. Paul Fiddes suggests that our participation in the life of God affects the way we do theology; we are not observers of God, but are involved in the energy and patterns of the divine life. When we ask *how* we live and move and have our being in God (Acts 17:28), Fiddes suggests that the image of dance helps us to move away from rational doctrines to a participation in the triune movements of God. Such participation gives us freedom to respond in different ways and to different degrees, and is the outworking of the creative purpose of a God who in love allows us to be.<sup>9</sup> I agree with Fiddes that the whole world is a place to encounter God. It is in the universe that we see God’s creativity continuously at work. We have a sacramental universe that displays God’s grace, love and faithfulness, and which in this sense can be described as expressing the body of the trinitarian God, just as Christ expresses what it is to be truly human.

In believer’s baptism the candidate dies with Christ, is buried, and is raised to a new life of discipleship in the power of the Spirit (see Romans 6:1-11). Through such participation the church and its individual members

<sup>8</sup> David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), pp. 77-81.

become both a sign and a sacrament of the Gospel, that is, Christ's body for the world. While the image of God's participation in the world is important for us to hold, we should not lose sight of God's transcendence as creator, sustainer, and the one through whom the universe will reach its final consummation. Fiddes expresses the demands of discipleship through an understanding of what it means to participate in God:

We should feel through their [our neighbours'] reaction the real pain of facing the particular. This is the kind of cost to be carried by those who are willing to be 'living sacraments'. The sacramental life is one that is open to the presence of God, and can open a door for others into the eternal movements of love and justice that are there ahead of us, and before us, and embracing us. This openness can be felt like the invitation to a dance, but sometimes like the raw edges of a wound.<sup>10</sup>

Our hope is based in God. Our true humanity is to be located in Christ, and when we locate ourselves outside Christ we find ourselves in disharmony with God's purpose for the well-being of creation.<sup>11</sup> Christians have a contribution to make. God created and entrusted the earth, and will redeem the whole of creation (Rom. 8:19-21). In Christ there is a new creation, but as ever in the New Testament, there is a now but not yet aspect. There are the first fruits of the Spirit, but still creation groans as it waits for God's human creatures to reach their perfection as children of God (Rom. 8:18-23). To believe in Christ in this world is to believe despite the realities of this world. Christ is risen, but we live in a world of suffering, pain and destruction. We have hope because we trust in the ultimate salvation for all creation, which now appears only in outline. This cannot be a cheap hope. Human beings must act in hope and the Spirit gives us the possibility to be what we are to become, that is: the children of God.

We find the same message in Col. 1:19-20:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Paul places the redemption of human beings in the context of the redemption of the whole creation. Creation is brought back into relationship with God through the cross. This takes place as human beings find their restored relationship with the Creator, through the cross and begin to live as hopeful disciples.<sup>12</sup> God is deeply and passionately

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.302.

<sup>11</sup> J. Houston, 'Creation and incarnation' in S. Tillet, ed., *Caring for Creation, Biblical and Theological Perspectives* (Oxford: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2005), pp. 88-89.

<sup>12</sup> C.J.H. Wright, *Living as the people of God* (Leicester: IVP, 1983), p. 19.

involved in His world. God is no absentee landlord, but indwelling, accompanying, incarnate, and present as Holy Spirit. There are important implications for our relationship both with the Creator and with creation. Moltmann maintains that:

There can be no redemption for human beings without the redemption of the whole of perishable nature. So it is not enough to see Christ's resurrection merely as 'God's eschatological act in history.' We also have to understand it as the first act in the new creation of the world. Christ's resurrection is not just a historical event. It is a cosmic event too.<sup>13</sup>

Often we are tempted to begin any discussion about the state of the world with a discussion about the role of human beings. When we do this, our hope diminishes because we only see the anthropocentric context. It is better to begin with God: God's view of creation; and God's concern for humanity. It is in God's promises that we find hope renewed.

We trust in the God of relationship, who draws us into the Trinity, where we join with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the dance of creation and eternity.

Our hope is based in God and God's grace alone – not our feelings or our successes and failures. As John wrote to the church: 'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' (1 John 4:10). It is God's grace expressed in baptism and our relationship with God and with each other expressed in the breaking of bread in communion. It is not dependent on how we feel.

Our ultimate hope is always in God. This is hope beyond chaos and catastrophe. It is a hope that includes accountability and judgement. This ultimate hope is brought into our present world through our faithful discipleship. This is hope in God, who is creator and redeemer, and who will ultimately make all things new.

## Conclusion

Above all, the church will be prayerful; recognising who God is and coming before him in praise and trust. We come to a God who loves us and we bring our failures, our weaknesses and our anxieties, giving thanks for the forgiveness that he will graciously give to all who confess. And we will

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<sup>13</sup> J. Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for today's world* (London: SCM Press, 1995), p. 83, quoted in Helle Liht, 'Restoring relationships: towards Ecologically Responsible Baptist Communities in Estonia', unpublished MTh thesis, IBTS, Prague, 2008, pp.38-41.

pray for each other and for our community and world, assured that it is God's world and we are his children, for whom he wants the very best.

We must remove any thought of a separation between church programmes and daily living, and seek to grow a faith that is fully engaged with our life and work. In this way we will become the revolutionary church of Christ. As Verna Dozier and James Adams challenge:

When the Christian church chose to worship Jesus instead of following him, it tamed much of what was threateningly radical in this disturbing person.<sup>14</sup>

Our goal is to make disciples, not build the church – that is Christ's work (Matthew 16:18). Our call is to be a mobilised church; to be Christ in the world through the Holy Spirit; and in so being, never stop reflecting upon our life and work, in the light of our faith in God. This is the picture of the church that I believe that God wants us to build, wherever we find ourselves.

## A Prayer

Lord, I hear your call and I want to submit myself to you again – wholly and completely – trusting in your promises, and with faith in your purposes for my life, and our life together.

I admit to who I am:

fractured, flawed, failing

..... but in you and through your cross I am:

redeemed, restored, renewed

..... and through the work and presence of your Spirit you:

have brought me into a relationship with you,

I am being transformed,

and I am becoming Christ-like – truly human

Hear the heartfelt thanks of my heart:

God my creator, Christ my Saviour, Holy Spirit my companion.

For you are the eternal God;

watching, waiting, within and without; now, and forever, Amen.

**The Revd Dr John Weaver**, incoming Chair of the IBTS Board of Trustees and an adjunct lecturer in theology at IBTS, Prague

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<sup>14</sup> Verna Dozier and James Adams in *Sisters and Brothers: Reclaiming a Biblical Idea of Community* (Boston, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 1993), p. 11.

## **The International Baptist Theological Seminary Archives – an update**

Readers of *The Journal of European Baptist Studies* are aware that the International Baptist Theological Seminary is to be moved from the current campus in Prague to a new facility in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The Board of Trustees has determined that this move will take place in the summer of 2014.

As part of the process of preparing for the move, the Library in Prague has been revising the core collection of books to focus on the degree programmes and research interests of the IBTS community when it is in its new location, and recognising that IBTS students and researchers will have access to the Vrije Universiteit library.

One special area of the IBTS Library has been the archives, which began in the early years of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschlikon and have been developed to include papers from former Presidents, Trustees and Rectors, alongside the archives of IBTS and, more recently, the archives of the European Baptist Federation, Baptist Response-Europe and the European Baptist Women's Union. During the last fifteen years the IBTS Archivist, the Revd Alec Gilmore, assisted by other volunteers, has done amazing work in cataloguing and checking the archives. He has now retired from this work. More recently, the present Rector, Dr Parush R Parushev, has asked me to keep a general oversight of this important archive.

Given that many of the early records of the European Baptist Federation are already located in the Angus Library of Regent's Park College in Oxford, the EBF General Secretariat has taken the decision that some archives, which have been housed in Prague for the last decade, will be moved to the Angus Library, Oxford, where they can be consulted by researchers and historians.

The IBTS Archive will move from Prague to Amsterdam and will continue to feature as part of the IBTS Library so that it can be consulted by those engaged in research through IBTS.

It is hoped that a project will be developed, possibly through the Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools, together with the Consortium of Seminaries related to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, to establish a comprehensive guide to Baptist archives in the northern hemisphere.



In the meantime, we report here those archives which have been moved from the IBTS Library in Prague to the Angus Library at Regent's Park College, Oxford, under the instructions of the EBF General Secretary.

The references below are to the master list of the IBTS archive, which is accessible at <http://www.ibts.eu/library/archives>.

### **Archive B: European Baptist Federation**

Covering the work and correspondence of EBF General Secretaries Ronald Goulding, Gerhard Klaas, Knud Wümpelmann, Karl-Heinz Walter and Theo Angelov. Also EBF Congresses Hamburg and Lillehammer and the abortive Congress planned for Bratislava and later Wroclaw. Minutes of the EBF Council and Executive 1950-1999. EBF Magazine 1960-1970.

### **Archive D: European Baptist Press Service**

Archives from 1961-2001 including press releases, photographs, documents, news clips and biographies.

### **Archive J: Baptist Aid Projects**

Baptist Relief Fund and Baptist Response-Europe.

### **Archive K: The European Baptist Women's Union**

This archive has been moved with the approval of the current President of the EBWU, as it was an archive deposited with IBTS by a previous President of the EBWU. Correspondence, documents and miscellaneous items 1988-1999.

Archives A, C, E, F, G, H, L and M are retained in the IBTS Archive as they either relate to IBTS, or were deposited with the IBTS Archive by the individual or organisation concerned.

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